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'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY

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'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE

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'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY

'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY

CHAPTER I.

IN ROUSDON BAY.

THERE are not in England many places more beautiful than Lyme Regis, where my childhood was spent. You have long hill-slopes, covered with orchards and hanging woods; you have broad valleys, in which are peaceful hamlets and yellow cornfields; you have open spaces on windy hill-tops, where tall thistles are crowned with winged balls of feathered spray, ready to be blown to the four corners of the earth by the carrier winds; you have chalk downs with bare turf, and here and there a bright trout stream, where you may see the quick-eyed water-rat or even catch a glimpse of an otter; you have straight and sturdy cliffs, looking out upon the waste of waters; you have here and there a little port with its little town; and you have, as the towering glory and splendour of the whole, the Undercliff, with its bracken fields and grassy knolls heaped one above the other, backed by the crags and faced by the sea, telling of fallen rocks and undermining waves.

My name, when I was a child and ran wild among these wonders, learning every day to feel their beauty more, was Pleasance Noel. There are plenty of Noels in Dorsetshire, but none of my kin in Lyme. I don't know how I came to be born there, nor do I know anything about my mother, who died when I was born; nor much about my father, who was a ship-carpenter. I was born, I believe, in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven. I never had a

birthday, because no one cared to remember such an insignificant circumstance as the birth of a sailor's child. My father went down in 'eighty-nine, on board the *Invincible*, which foundered in a heavy gale off Jamaica, with all hands except two or three.

Dan Gulliver came to my help, being always the most kind-hearted of men, and, besides, a friend of my father's. He lived at Rousdon, which is three miles and a half from Lyme, and was at that time a widower with two boys living, two or three years older than myself.

There are a good many Gullivers in Dorsetshire, as well as Noels. When I first read Gulliver's Travels, it was the more real to me, because I was sure that the honest captain must have come from my part of the country, and I was equally sure that in appearance he greatly resembled Dan.

Nobody, except his sons, ever called him anything else but Dan. Not Mr. Gulliver, or Daniel Gulliver, but plain Dan. As early as I can remember him he had grey hair. He was a man of middle height and strong build, with immense hands; he had a face covered all over with crowsfoot wrinkles, and it had the kindliest and gentlest expression that can dwell upon human countenance; his light-blue eyes rested upon one when he spoke, as if he loved to look upon his friend; he was as incapable of thinking or speaking evil as of doing it. He was everybody's friend. I suppose he knew very little of evil, living as he did upon his seaboard farm, as remote from the world and as little suspicious of danger as did those poor men of Laish, who dwelt "after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure."

His estate consisted of a patrimonial ten-acre slip, lying chiefly along the cliff. It was a poor piece of land, which grew scanty crops, hardly worth the trouble of cultivation, but it gave occupation to the two boys, Job and Jephthah, and to the one farm-labourer whom we employed, Isaac Agus. Dan himself looked after the boats, of course. If the land was poor, the farmhouse and yards showed every sign of prosperity. There were pigs which grunted in the sties or roamed about the yard, grubbing among roots with philan-

thropic resolve to waste no time in becoming good pork; fowls which laid eggs and chuckled over them; ducks which drove broods of little soft yellow balls, which might have been cocoons had they not been live things, into the pond; geese, on the waste land, which cackled to each other encouragement to get fat come Michaelmas; and there were the most generous of cows in the matter of milk. The dairy, where Mrs. Agus and I made butter, was always full of cream and milk.

The twin boys, Job and Jephthah, were, like their father, of middle height, with broad shoulders and big hands; they were as exactly like each other as a pair of Chinamen, but when you came to live in the house, you learned gradually to distinguish certain little differences not apparent to strangers. Outside the farm no one knew Jephthah from Job, and addressed either at random as Job or Jephthah. They had blue eyes, like their father, light-brown hair, and a gentle way, which they inherited. But they exaggerated the paternal characteristics. His gentleness became, with them, slowness; his taciturnity became absolute dumbness.

The most frequent visitor was Joshua Meech, Dan's nephew. He was a miller at Up Lyme. When I was sixteen he must have been about six-and-twenty—some seven years older than the boys. He, too, was strongly built and well-proportioned, but he had the other Dorsetshire face—not that of the Gullivers. Everybody knows that there are two faces in Dorsetshire—that with blue eyes, brown hair, and a round face; and that with dark hair, and dark eyes, and an oval face; sometimes very beautiful, but sometimes forbidding and harsh. Joshua's face had the latter character. His eyes were too close together; his expression was threatening; his chin too long and square; his manner was imperative. He was a masterful man, a man who always got what he wanted; if he desired a thing, he said he should have it, and he got it. The history that follows, however, is that of a thing which he desired vehemently, and did not get. Another visitor, and the only other friend of the family, was the rector of Rousdon, the Reverend Benjamin Burden.

Rousdon parish contained a population of eleven souls, six

of whom came from Rousdon Farm. Its yearly value was thirty-five pounds. There was also a house with a bit of glebe-land. The house was a cottage; the glebe-land was a garden cultivated by the rector himself. He had an orchard, the apples of which he sold for cider; a fruit and vegetable garden; two or three pigs; some fowls; and sometimes, the gift of his churchwarden, some ducks. He was a bachelor, and lived entirely alone in his cottage. His church was a barn with a thatched roof, kept from falling down by Dan and the boys. The old pews were worm-eaten; the pulpit was tottering; the broken windows were repaired with oiled paper; the covers were dropping off the church-Bible and Prayer-book; his surplice was in rags; there was no church-plate; and the one weekly service was a duet between himself and Dan, who was at once his clerk and his churchwarden. The old rector wore a wig on Sundays; on other days he tied up his head in a handkerchief; he never forgot his cloth, or went without a cassock, though that garment was in rags; he had the dignity of his profession, though he had forgotten all his learning; had ceased to take any delight in books, and was nothing but a gardener, a rustic, and a peasant-priest.

Our house, at the back of which lay the farmyard, was a good-sized six-roomed house, with a thatched roof. The windows in the front looked out upon Rousdon Bay, which lay about eighty feet below us. They opened on hinges, and the small panes, many of which were bull's-eyed, were set in heavy leaden frames. There was a great porch, beside which flourished the finest fuchsia-tree—ten feet high and ten feet across—that ever was seen. There was a sloping garden in front, where I grew beans, peas, and cabbages, with all kinds of simple flowers. We were quite rich people. When the distress was deep all over the country we felt none. We lived comfortably; there was no pinching, no talk of economies. I was well-dressed and well cared for; the boys had all they wanted.

To be sure, in those days, the ideas of a farmer as to plenty were simple. We never had any holiday or any change. The boys got a little teaching, as I did, from the rector. We had

no newspapers and very few books; few country-people could read; there were no conveniences for travel; things were rough; men were rough; fighting was common; we were inconceivably ignorant; we did not look or hope for any change—except for peace. That was what we wanted. I suppose the people of that generation ought to have been unhappy, feeling themselves so greatly at a disadvantage compared with their grandchildren, who would certainly have gas, railways, chloroform, electric light, cheap newspapers, all sorts of things. But somehow they were not unhappy. They were just as happy, in fact, as people are now, except for the wickedness of war, the ambition of kings, and the injustice of man. And these are things which seemed destined ever to plague, vex, and trouble the world.

Now, the most remarkable thing concerning Dan, his two sons, and Joshua Meech his nephew, was that their hands were always brown with tar. There was, besides, a smell of things connected with boats always lingering about the house; and though fishing-nets were constantly spread over the garden or on the beach, there was very little fishing done.

Dan, farmer though he was, dressed habitually as a boatman. On Sundays, in the summer, he wore white ducks, a blue jacket with brass buttons, and a straw hat, just as if he were a navy man. On other days he wore great boots, a simple blue shirt, and a tarpaulin. Down in the bay there were three boats. One of these was a safe, heavy-built fishing smack. Dan called her the *Chace Mary*. It was a good many years before I learned to recognise in this name the French *chasse-marée*. Dan picked her up one night abandoned in the Channel—his experience decided her origin and her name. The boys and Joshua used now and then to go out fishing in her, bringing home in the morning a rich cargo of bright and beautiful fish. We kept the best for ourselves, and the rector never failed to come for his tithe of John Dory, bass, hake, pilchards, or mackerel. The rest went to Lyme to be sold.

The boat which lay beside the *Chace Mary* was of very different build. She would be called now, though her lines

would no longer find favour, a fifteen-ton yacht, sloop-rigged. I do not know where Dan bought her; she was long and narrow; she was decked; she carried any amount of canvas; and she was, as Dan often boasted, the very fastest boat in the Channel. She was called the *Dancing Polly*. Hauled up on the beach was a little dingy, gay with bright paint, and provided with a neat lugsail, and a spritsail, and a pair of sculls. She belonged to me, but was, of course, always at the service of the Firm.

For, not to delay any longer a confession which must sooner or later be made, we were all of us smugglers by trade, and farmers by pretence. The ten acres of barren cliff land could never have kept us all during those hard times, even in a poor way. We were a gang of smugglers. Dan was the head of the firm by hereditary succession. His two boys were partners by the same right. Joshua Meech was a partner by grace and free gift of Dan. I, Pleasance Noel, was an accomplice, aider, and abettor.

In the reign of George the Third it was as impossible to make people believe that smuggling was wrong as to make a rustic believe in the wickedness of knocking over a hare in a field. To evade the duty was meritorious. Then there was the romance about the trade: perils surrounded it on every side; across the water you might be caught by the French authorities, and kept in prison, or even shot as a spy; or you might be picked up by a French privateer; or you might be cut out by a revenue cutter; or you might be arrested while landing your cargo. These things were considered, and went to make a daring smuggler a sort of hero. Lastly, all the country-side stood in with him. It was he who brought over the best French brandy, packages of lace, boxes of gloves or of perfumes; he was the provider of otherwise unattainable luxuries; he was a public benefactor. In no country inn could you get such spirits as came out of the illicit kegs; when a landlord had any he would whisper its recommendation to a guest; the squires bought it, the magistrates bought it, the very revenue officers bought it, the clergy bought it: no one was too good, too highly placed, too

scrupulous to buy it. A fine and flattering perfume of universal gratitude perpetually soothed the soul of Dan Gulliver; the sense of an heroic reputation added dignity to a life which, if spent only on the farm, would have been certainly monotonous, and probably ignoble.

Gratitude among the people naturally took the shape of complicity. It sometimes happened that Dan's carts—those innocent carts laden with poultry, vegetables, or fish, which Job or Jephthah drove into Lyme — were stopped and searched. One would think that Dan was regularly warned, because nothing was ever found in them. If the revenue cutter chanced to look in at Rousdon Bay, the *Dancing Polly* was lying at anchor, without the least sign of an intended run, and Dan would be caulking the *Chace Mary*, or mending fishing-nets, or painting the dingy, with grave face and a twinkle in his eye.

With a fast boat like the *Dancing Polly*, with four such handy boatmen as the crew who manned her, the chief danger was that of landing the cargo. It was desirable to know, before the run, where the revenue cutter was; this information was got by myself, or by one of the boys, from the boatmen of the Cove at Lyme, or from the fishermen of Beer. She might have been heard of at Weymouth, or she might be lying in Bridport. Once, when we thought she was away up the Solent, she came out of Lulworth Cove, and chased Dan for three long days, so that he only got away, without throwing his cargo overboard, by the swiftness of his heels and the providential interposition of a fog. We had to get news from Weymouth, from Swanage, Poole, Lymington, and Yarmouth, in the west; as from Beer, Sidmouth, Ladram Bay, and Dartmouth. The revenue cutter once ascertained to be out of the way, there was little or no danger of interference from any of the shore-going folk.

When all seemed safe as regards the excise, and a run was resolved on, it was brave to see the little craft, with Dan at the "hellum," Job and Jephthah in the bows, and Joshua 'midships, beating her way out of the little narrow bay, straight out into the blackness beyond—for Dan never started except

at night, and when there was a moonless sky. I would stand on the beach, the wind blowing my hair about and the spray flying into my face, to get the last sight of the gallant boat. Then I would go home and stay there, quite alone, till they returned, in a couple of days or so, laden with the brandy in kegs. I never had any fear for them. Dan knew every inch of the French and English coasts; he could steer blindfold; he could find Rousdon Bay in the blackest night: he was not afraid, in his tight little craft, of any reasonable weather, provided only that when he landed there were no revenue men waiting to capture the hero of a hundred runs.

Dan was always a sailor, in manner and dress. Job and Jephthah played two parts. When they wore corduroys and a smock they were farm-labourers, and slouched in their gait, lifting their feet heavily and swinging their shoulders, as those do who go much upon clay; when they were on board they were dressed like boatmen and they rolled like sailors. Joshua, on the other hand, played three parts. As a miller he had the reputation of being grasping and greedy of gain, but honest in his dealings. In this capacity he was always floury, like his men, and had it not been for the tar upon his fingers, you would say he had never smelt salt water. As a sailor he was as daring as Dan, and almost as skilful. But he had a third character, which he reserved for Saturday evening and Sunday. Then he dressed himself in a black coat, and became a Primitive Methody: one of a certain very small body so styled by themselves, who met in a chapel about twelve feet square, and took turns to preach and pray. His methodism has nothing to do with my story, except to show the masterful character of the man. He would be a leader; he wanted people to think as he told them, and he could only do this in a dissenting chapel. Dan, who accepted the authority of the Rev. Mr. Burden, and the Church, was, in his way, as religious as he was honest. There is nothing, he frequently argued, against smuggling, either in Bible or Prayer-book.

It was among these people that I spent the first seventeen years of my life. Such education as I had was given me by the rector at odd moments. I could read, but had few books,

and those I knew by heart. They were Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," and one or two more. Writing I learned by slow degrees: my spelling has never, I own, been correct, nor can I understand the fuss which is made about that accomplishment. If the writer's meaning is clear, why object to the omission or the addition of a letter or two? There was little encouragement to literature in Rousdon Farm. Job and Jephthah had learned, like myself, to read and write, but as they never practised either art, and supplemented memory only by chalk-marks on the cart, I suspect they had forgotten both. Dan regarded writing as useful for commercial purposes, and reading on the Sunday as an aid to devotion. In respect to other uses, there were instances which he had heard of where a passion for books actually led the victim, by imperceptible degrees, to the gallows. Certainly in those years there were many roads to that dismal tree.

I did not read much, my duties at home were soon got through, and the rest of my time I spent upon the water, alone or with Dan, and on the Undercliff. In the evening there was sewing. But all day long, and all the year round, rain or sunshine, I was in the open air, gathering flowers in the Holmbush fields, climbing among the bracken under the Pinhay cliffs, singing all alone in the woods upon the hillsides, out upon the sea in the dingy, or, in summer, bathing and swimming where the rocks would have hidden me from casual eyes if any had ever chanced to pass that way. It was a lonely place, facing a lonely sea; few ships ever sailed across that great bay save the heavy craft which brought coal from Wales, or the coasters which traded from port to port, or the fishing-craft from Lyme and Beer. I had the sea all to myself when I put out in the dingy, ran up the little sail, and sat in the stern, tiller in one hand and sheet in the other, while the boat slipped through the short crisp waves with a murmurous whish, leaving its little white track behind, while my fancy ran riot, and I had visions, such as come to the young and innocent, of a golden and impossible future, lying among figures indistinct and misty.

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Sometimes I went with Dan to Lyme, where one could buy things, and see the shops in the street and the ships in the Cove. On Sunday evenings, in summer, one could sometimes go to Lyme Church, which was surely the most remarkable and delightful church in the whole of England. To begin with, it was a church built on a staircase. You climbed up some of the steps and you were in the churchyard. More steps brought you to the porch, which was long and deep; at the end of it more steps again brought you to the line of the nave; halfway up the nave a short flight of steps took you to a higher level under the pulpit and reading desk; a last climb landed you on the level of the chancel. I believe there were additional steps to the altar. This gradual rising of tier above tier produced a remarkable effect, especially if, as I did, you sat in one of the galleries. Wherever they could have a gallery they had one; here one and there one; sticking them between pillars, so as to produce a general result, which, to the ignorant eye of a girl, was grand and delightful. One of the galleries was beautifully decorated with a death's head and bones, and an appropriate text. And they sang hymns. They were taken very slowly, but they were sung to real tunes, which one could carry away and sing at the top of one's voice far out to sea in the little boat. The hymns were set to the music of a band consisting chiefly of stringed instruments, tuned stealthily between the different parts of the service. This was all the music, and these were all the tunes, which I heard as a child.

During the whole of my childhood, and for a good many years afterwards, the talk was all of war. For five-and-twenty years England was fighting. On the south coast the war might at any moment become more than a rumour; there was no reason why a French privateer should not cross over, and do what mischief she could. Every day, before breakfast, we all solemnly looked out to sea—Dan with his glass—to see if an enemy was hovering over the coast, and once we saw a naval action. The Frenchman was a privateer; the Englishman a brig-of-war carrying twelve guns. They ran side by side for a while, firing incessantly, the Englishman gradually

reducing the distance. At last they came to close quarters, and our men boarded her. Oh what a sight! It was too far off for us to see the horrors of battle, the dead and wounded; but we could make out, when the smoke cleared away, that the Union Jack was run up where the French flag had been flying, and Dan solemnly, with tears in his eyes, thanked the God of Victory. It was a brave and gallant action; they made the commander of the brig a first-lieutenant for it; then they sent him out to Jamaica, where they forgot him altogether, although he did plenty of other things quite as good. This was the way they often treated our brave sailors. Thirty years afterwards he came home, still a first-lieutenant, and bald, by reason of the many men who had climbed up over his head.

Heavens! how brave our men were, and what fights they fought! They cut out French ships under the guns of their own batteries. They engaged vessels double their own weight; whenever they saw an enemy's ship they attacked her. The papers were full of naval actions, which were always victories. I never saw the papers, but I heard the news whenever Dan came back from Lyme. Buonaparte was going to invade England, and made enormous preparations; the whole country took up arms, young and old; the war-fever possessed the British bull-dog. There was no fear in our hearts, nor any hesitation. Looking back upon that time, I can only feel that surely none other than the hand of GOD was upon us; how else could we, fighting against such odds as never any other nation encountered, have fought so bravely, and finished the struggle with so much honour?

CHAPTER II.

LOVE THE UNCONQUERED.

I HAVE always kept as a holyday the 14th of August in every year since the year 1803. It is sacred to me for two memories—the first being that on this day I first saw my own gallant and true-hearted Will.

It was about half-past four in the afternoon. I was running

down the crags by a way known only to myself, breast-high in bracken, jumping from stone to stone, singing at the top of my voice, with flying hair and outstretched arms, when I suddenly came upon Dan Gulliver and a stranger.

"I saw," said Will afterwards, when he became my sweetheart—"I saw a tall girl of sixteen, who might have been twenty, with blue eyes and the sweetest face in the world. She carried a sun-bonnet in her hand, and she wore a tight-fitting frock."

"If I had known who was coming," I said, "I should have put on my Sunday frock."

"Your Sunday frock!" he cried, in his foolish way; "why, what could be more lovely than my woodland nymph, flying to meet us, up to her arms in the fern, bareheaded, her hands filled with flowers, her eyes with smiles, and her pretty mouth with a song. Sunday frock! Leave Sunday frocks to city girls.

"See miss and madam lay their snares,
Painted faces,
Studied graces,
All for catching unawares
Flights of gamesome lovers."

But this talk came afterwards.

When I met them in the path, as I finished my run down the slope, I stopped short, shame-faced, being unused to the sight of strangers.

"Pleasance," said Dan, "this young gentleman is coming to stay awhile at the farm; can you help to amuse him, think you?"

"I assure Miss Gulliver," said the gentleman, taking off his hat to me, "that I shall give as little trouble as possible."

"The boys," said Dan, "can sleep at the cottage. Do'ee now, Pleasance."

This was the old man's way. I was to seem the mistress, who ought to have been the servant.

I turned, and led the way to the house in silence. Truth to say, I was not best pleased with the prospect of a strange man in the house. Like all wild things, I loved solitude.

Dan carried a valise, and the young man carried a wooden case.

It was not till after we got home, and I had brushed my hair, and put on another frock, and come downstairs again, that I saw what manner of man our guest was.

No one must think that I was so presumptuous as to fall in love with him. What did I know about love? My heart leaped up, however, because I looked upon the most handsome and splendid man I had ever seen. To be sure I had seen but few. The gentlemen of Lyme Regis were mostly advanced in life, and had, more or less, bottle-noses, by reason of much rum.

This young gentleman was about twenty-two years of age. He was tall and rather slight in figure; his eyes were brown, and from the very first I saw that they were frank, honest eyes; his hair was brown and curly; his cheeks were burned by the sun; his fingers, I noticed, were long and thin; they were, in fact, the fingers of a musician.

His wooden case was lying on the table. I asked him if he would have it taken upstairs.

"If I am allowed," he said, "I should like to keep this case down here. And perhaps, Mr. Gulliver——"

"Call me Dan," said he; "I'm used to it. And this is my adopted daughter, Pleasance Noel."

"Dan, then, and Miss Noel——"

"Call me Pleasance," I said, imitating Dan, in order to show my good-breeding. "I am used to it."

"Pleasance, then. My name is William Campion. Perhaps you would let me play to you sometimes?"

In the case was a fiddle. This wonderful young man could play the fiddle. Now of all the instruments of music which man has ever invented for drawing forth the soul of man, it has always seemed to me that the fiddle is the most efficacious. At the first stroke of the bow I jumped in my seat and clasped my hands. As he stood by the window and drew out the air softly and sweetly, my spirit hung upon the notes, and for the time I was in sweet heaven.

He only played one tune then. When he had finished it,

he laid back the fiddle in its case. I noticed with what tenderness, as if he loved it.

"Did you like it, Pleasance?" he asked. "But I saw that you did."

Then I made tea, a luxury not of every day—Job and Jephthah, who did not like tea, and were modest, stayed in the farmyard among the pigs—and after tea, Mr. Campion, Dan, and I went down to the bay and talked about boats. First we went aboard the *Dancing Polly*, and Mr. Campion praised her lines, and then we looked at the *Chace Mary*, and when there was nothing more to be said about either of these two crafts, we got into the dingy and went for a sail, I holding the tiller. At eight, after the sun had set, we got back again and went home. I remember that there was cold boiled hand of pork for supper, and that Job and Jephthah, who had polished up their faces with yellow soap till they shone like mirrors, came in bashfully, and sat side by side, eating vast quantities of pig, and saying never a word.

Supper ended, Dan lit his pipe, mixed his brandy-punch, and, after courteously pressing the tobacco and the spirits on his guest, invited him to play something.

I jumped in my chair again when Mr. Campion laughed, and drew his fiddle out of the case once more.

He played half-a-dozen tunes. Now, on the violin, Mr. Campion was a magician. For my own part, I was carried away into the seventh heaven from the very beginning. First, he played, "Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies," which inspired one with a fine feeling of national pride and respect for seafaring Britons. Next he played, "Oh dear! what can the matter be?" a song just then quite new, at least to Dorsetshire folk. This made us just a little tearful, and put us in the right frame for "Early in the morning, just as the sun was rising." Then he played "Within a mile of Edinburgh town;" the most delicious ditty I have ever heard then or since. After that he played "Jack's the lad," the song which they have since made into the College Hornpipe. It was then that Dan, who had been

chiming in whenever he happened to know a word or two of the song, nodding his head, and beating time with his pipe, laid it down, and standing up, solemnly executed something distantly resembling a sailor's hornpipe on the floor. Will went on playing it, with a laugh in his eyes, faster and faster, till the enthusiasm spread to Jephthah and Job, who looked at each other guiltily, and then softly arose and retired to the adjacent farmyard, where I saw them in the moonlight gravely dancing opposite each other where the straw was driest. Then Will changed the tune, and played, singing the words himself in a lusty tuneful baritone, "While the raging seas did roar." Dan caught the chorus and sang it with him. What an evening we had! Then he sang "Hearts of Oak." Job and Jephthah came back for this, and steadied each other, as the song enjoined, with sympathetic shoulder-thwacks heavy enough to fell an ox.

Lastly, my own turn came. The musician stopped, and his expression changed. He looked thoughtfully for a moment, and then, still with his eyes fixed upon me, began to play an air, the like of which I had never heard or dreamed of; for it made my heart to beat, my brain to reel, my eyes to swim. Dan resumed his pipe, and drank a whole glass of brandy-punch; he did not care apparently for this kind of music; Job and Jephthah stole away noiselessly, and, I suppose, went to bed. I had a strange and delightful sense that this music was being played for myself alone; that the musician took this way of putting thoughts into my head which had never been there before. I felt a passionate yearning for something unknown. I was in some new place of light and beauty inconceivable; my spirit rose with a kind of rapture, I was out of the body, floating in the air: there were no words in which I could clothe this new sensation. I could have wept for very joy, but no tears came. Presently it seemed as if my feet were moving in cadence, and my whole frame undulating with the waves of melody. I could bear it no longer, and should have fallen, but that Dan caught me with a "Steady, pretty, steady; going to sleep with the music in your ears?"

I was not going to sleep, indeed. But Mr. Campion ceased playing, and told me that it was a German dance.

Nearly all that night I lay awake, wondering what new world was this into which I had got a glimpse. And when I slept, it was to dream of strange delicious things, clothed in shapes new and delightful.

It appeared next morning that Dan's idea of entertaining the guest was to hand him entirely over to me. All the others, to be sure, had work to do. Mr. Campion was easy to amuse, when one got over the first shyness; and he was so good and thoughtful that the shyness very soon disappeared. Certainly, I had plenty to show him: there were all kinds of sylvan ways: there was the Undercliff, where they had just been cutting the brown fern for litter, and left open spaces for fresh green grass to grow. It was covered, too, with its autumn robes. In August there were the delicate pale yellow flowers of the Traveller's Joy, the red berries of the rowan, the bunches of blackberries, as yet only red, the tall purple thistles, and the crimson foxglove. It was something to have the Undercliff to show a stranger. Or we might walk along the cliff itself to Axemouth, Seaton, and Beer; or we might go inland along Colway Lane to Up Lyme, where we could find valleys and woods, and broad stretches of corn-grown hillside; or we might go fishing in the calm evenings or early mornings; or we might up sail and slip along the coast to Lyme, Charmouth, or even Bridport, should the wind hold fair.

Surely, of all delightful companions that any girl ever had, mine was the most delightful. He was always happy. Nothing ever ruffled his temper. He was satisfied with our simple way of life; he seemed to want nothing else than to go about all day long with me; he never tired of playing to us in the evening; he even encouraged my ignorant prattle, which must have seemed to him so silly, and preferred hearing me talk to telling me stories of the great world.

He came in August, he stayed with us all through September and October. He came when the corn was ripening; he stayed after the corn was got in, and even the cider apples

gathered. I lived, for my part, in a fool's paradise, thinking it would last for ever.

The beginning of trouble came from Joshua Meech.

We were so happy, Dan and I, with our new friend, that we hardly noticed the strange fact that Joshua, who had been wont to spend at least one evening in the week with us, had only visited us once since Mr. Campion came. And that evening on which our guest played he sat looking glum and ill-tempered. One day in October, never dreaming that Mr. Campion was in any way associated with Joshua's ill-temper, I took him across the fields to show him Joshua's mill. It certainly was the prettiest of all mills; not one of the great towers which spread out long arms, and seem as if they are going to catch you up in the air, and carry you round and round till you fly off and are killed; not at all like one of them, but a sweet and lovely water-mill.

First, there was a square building with a high-pitched thatched roof. It consisted of two parts, one being the mill and the other the cottage, in which Joshua lived, all by himself. In the mill was a door and two windows, one above and one below. At the end of the cottage was an undershot wheel, twenty feet in diameter, which all day long went slowly round and round, while the water of the rivulet, brought along in a leat two feet wide, rolled melodiously over the edges of the buckets, and turned the great wheel by its weight. And while the water clashed and the wheel grunted, you could hear within the house the sound of toil and labour, the grinding, crushing, and grunting that belong to a mill. Nor was that all. At the back of the mill was an orchard, where the pink and the red cider apples looked pleasant—they could not look sweet. Beyond the orchard was a piggery, and then you came to the bed of a stream, which was dry in summer, save for a little green damp among the stones, by the side of which was a coppice of alder-trees, and behind the alders a dark deep wood, into which you might peer all a summer's day and dream boundless things.

In front of the house the winter stream and the leat united and made a magnificent lasher, into which the water boiled

and bubbled. When the two streams were fairly joined and reconciled to the union, they ran off together over the stones in one bright and merry rivulet.

We found Joshua standing at the door; he was covered all over with flour, as becomes the sober, hard-working miller, looking as if his thoughts never ran on anything more venturous than sacks of corn and the everlasting grunting of his water-wheel. When he saw us, however, his face clouded over, and instead of coming to greet us, he retired within the mill.

I ran to the door and called him out. He came, scowling at Will, who was seated on a trunk of a tree.

"Are you going to stay long in these parts, young gentleman?" he asked.

There was something in his tone which Will resented.

"Perhaps I shall," he said shortly.

"It depends, I suppose," said Joshua, "on how long you like to dangle about with a young girl. We don't like London ways in this part of the country."

Will flushed red.

"We will discuss this subject when the young lady is not present," he said.

"I shall be glad of an opportunity," said Joshua slowly. "Why, there, that's spoke like a man. Maybe I can get round to Rousdon in the evening."

I ought to have known, but I did not, what this meant.

You see, it was a fighting time. If common men quarrelled with each other, they had it out at once with fists or quarter-staff. Gentlemen fought with pistols. Friends and seconds saw fair play.

Will, in fact, was going to fight Joshua Meech.

"What does he mean?" I asked presently, when we had left our sulky Joshua, and were walking in the meadow beside the alder-trees. "What does he mean by dangling with a young girl? I am the young girl, I suppose."

"I suppose you are, Pleasance," he replied. "Sit down on this stile and I will tell you what he means."

I sat on the upper bar of the stile, Will on the second

step, and he looked up in my face with those smiling steadfast eyes of his, which always went straight to my heart.

"Joshua Meech means," he began, "that some men take a delight in stealing away girls' hearts, especially country-girls' hearts, and then leaving them."

I did not quite understand.

"Don't open your pretty blue eyes too wide, Pleasance," he went on; "I will explain by an illustration. Now listen—

"Ever so long ago there was a young girl, about sixteen years of age—your age—living in the country by the seaside, with a jolly old sailor and his two sons, just as you have been living. She was a pretty girl—as pretty—as pretty—as you. She had the same blue eyes, the same sweet face, the same ruby lips, the same smile, and the same light brown curls, and I think she wore the same sort of straw hat."

"O Mr. Campion!" For all of a sudden I found out—myself.

"There was a man who lived not far from her, a man who had a mill. I think he was a jealous, austere creature, but he was in love with this girl."

What did he mean?

"Then there came from London a young man who carried a fiddle and played it. He was quite a commonplace young man, who had no virtues except that he was fond of his fiddle. He came into the country intending to be quite alone, to sail and fish, and make music all to himself. He found, instead of solitude, a paradise, peopled with one Eve."

It sounded very pretty, if I could only understand it.

"This young man found her society so delightful that he stayed on. Presently he began to feel as if he did not care ever to go away again—unless—unless she would go away with him."

Then I understood that he had been making up a little story about himself and me, and I wondered what else he meant. I suppose I looked bewildered.

"My dear, my dear, do you not understand me?" he caught both my hands, and pressed them to his lips. "Do you not understand me? I want you to promise to be my wife."

"Your wife, Mr. Campion? But you are a gentleman."

"Listen, little innocent; would you like me to go away?"

I shook my head, and the tears came into my eyes.

"Do you like being with me?"

"Yes," I answered quite frankly, because there was nothing to conceal, "I like being with you very much."

"How should you feel if you knew that you would never see me again?"

I shuddered.

"I must go away, unless you bid me stay. You can only do that by promising to marry me.'

"But what will Dan say?"

"Dan will agree. Say, am I to stay "

I gave him one hand, but he took both.

"Stay, Mr. Campion, if you please."

Then he took me to his arms, and held me tight, and kissed me again and again on the lips, till I tore myself from him, abashed and confused.

"Now you are all my own," he said, "and I am yours. We are pledged to each other. I will tell you exactly what we will do"—he had his whole plan complete in his head. "We will go up to London. You shall live with John Huntspill, my partner. You shall learn the things which you have to learn; and then, when you are externally to all the world what you are now to my eyes alone, I will take you to my mother, and say to her: 'Mother, this young lady from Dorsetshire is going to be my wife.'"

"Your mother!" My heart sank a little.

"Yes. By the way," he added, with a laugh, "she is very particular about family and rank; what shall we say?"

"My father's rank was ship's carpenter," I said simply.

He laughed. "We will tell her the exact truth, and ask her if she would find a lovelier girl among the bluest blood. I forgot to tell you that my mother is blind."

Then, holding my hand in his, he began to tell me all about himself and his mother.

He was an only child. His father was a City Merchant, whom the king knighted during his year as lord mayor

He was Sir Godfrey Campion. His mother was a widow. She lived in the City, he told me, in the square of Great St. Simon Apostle. He would be himself, in two years, by his father's will, nominally the senior partner in the house of Campion & Co., of London, Bristol, and Jamaica. But John Huntspill would do the work.

"I should like to tell you another thing, dear," he said. "My mother and I parted in anger. She—one must not think ill of one's mother—but she does not remember that I am nearly twenty-three years of age. We quarrelled on account of my violin. She thinks a fiddle only fit for an Italian musician, for a bear-leader, or for sailors ashore. Above all, she thinks it unsuited to the head of a City house. Perhaps it is, but then you see I never wanted to play the fiddle in the office. And then—well—then—there was a scene one evening. My dear mother has a high spirit; and when she came to comparing her son—the fiddle-scraping son—with his late father, Sir Godfrey Campion, and when that son declared that the comparison was not fair, and one thing led to another; why—there is nothing strange in the fact that the son resolved to take his fiddle into the country for awhile. That is how I came here."

"Yes," I said, trying in my ignorant, country way, to realise what all this meant—the lord mayor, knighthood, and the rest.

"Was your father an admiral?" I asked at length.

He stared for a moment, and then burst out laughing. Of course, he always laughed at everything. Years afterwards I asked him how it was he did not lose patience with so much ignorance.

"Lose patience?" he asked, in his silly, delightful way, "it all helped to make me love you the more madly."

Now, it was not such very great ignorance, after all, because I had heard of admirals who were knighted. It was natural for me to think that all men who were called Sir were admirals.

There is one thing which no woman can ever understand—what it is in her, and her alone, that makes a man fall down

and worship her. I was the most simple and ignorant of country-girls, and he was a gentleman. Yet he risked the happiness of his whole life on the chance that I should become what he imagined me to be already. My heart sinks still with a sort of humiliation to think how unworthy of that true and loyal gentleman I was. You will see, presently, of what things I was capable.

We went home at length, hand in hand, across the fields. Will said nothing to Dan, and we had our tea just as usual, only that I was silent.

In the evening Will went out, accompanied by the two boys. I had quite forgotten about Joshua, and wondered a little at his leaving me.

It was dark when they came back. Will had his left hand tied round with a pocket-handkerchief, his right eye was black, and he had got a gash across his cheek. He had been fighting Joshua Meech, and he had left, as I afterwards learned, that hero senseless on the ground.

Jephthah—or was it Job?—announced the battle and its result. "He be give Joshua a drubbing," he said, with a cheerful chuckle.

Now, no one in that house bore Joshua any grudge, and yet at the news, we all congratulated ourselves and the victor. I am almost ashamed now to think that Will was more glorious in my eyes than ever.

There could be no fiddling that evening, and Dan had a double ration of brandy-punch.

A fight in those days was a mere episode in a man's life. It might occur at any moment. Everybody fought, and a gentleman learned boxing as part of his education. But I was anxious that there should be no bad blood, and the next day I went over to the mill to see Joshua.

His face was a good deal more battered than Will's. It was evident that he had taken punishment manfully. He asked me to go into his own room for a talk.

"It is your politeness, I suppose," I began, "that makes you fight a strange gentleman?"

"What's a fight?" he replied. "That's nothing neither to

him nor to me. He's a well-plucked one, he is, as ever handled a pair of fists. Which makes it worse."

"What is worse, Joshua?"

"Now, no more fooling, Pleasance. You listen to me. No good comes of young gentlemen dangling with young girls. Besides, I won't have it. He's got to go."

"You won't have it?"

"No," he said, banging his hand on the table. "I won't have it. There. You've got to be my wife."

"I've got—to—be—your wife?"

"O' course you have. I've told Dan long ago. Why, I've been saving up for it these ten years. Next Easter Sunday I mean to marry you."

I only stared.

"Don't think, Pleasance, that a man can't love a girl because he hasn't got his mouth stuffed with fine words. Gar! it makes one sick to think of it. I've loved you since you were a child. And he shall go."

"He shall not go, Joshua," I said. "And I will never, never marry you. Remember that."

"He shall go," he said firmly. "One way or the other he shall go. Don't make me desperate, Pleasance. He shall go. Now you know what to expect, behave according."

I sprang to my feet and rushed out of the cottage. The man's set lips and steady eyes frightened me.

I told Will. But he laughed at my fears. What was Joshua to him? At the most there could only be another fight.

Joshua came no more to the farm, and I did not see him again, till the trouble came upon me and mine.

And now I must leave the pleasant time, when every day brought some new happiness and some fresh brightness with it, and come to the story of that trouble.

It was partly my own fault.

One day—we had been sailing to Ladram Bay and back in the little boat; we had just beached her, and were sitting on the pebbles hand in hand.

"What does Dan do," asked Will, "with two boats?"

"The *Chace Mary* is the fishing-boat," I replied; "the *Dancing Polly* is for the runs to France."

"The what?" cried Will.

"The runs over for the brandy, you know. Why, she is the fastest boat that ever crossed the Channel."

Will listened with a bewildered face. Presently he laughed.

"So Dan is a smuggler, is he? Crafty old man!"

"Why," I said, with pride, "everybody knows that Dan is the boldest smuggler along the coast. They've given up trying to catch him now."

"Oh! And Job and Jephthah?"

"They go too, of course."

"And—and the jealous amoroso, Don Joshua, does he go too?"

"Yes, he goes too. They all four go."

Will whistled.

"Shade of my sainted father!" he said. "Was it for this that you brought your son up in pious hatred of the illicit traffic which interfered with your own gains?"

I did not understand one word of what he said.

"I will explain," he said. "My father made his fortune and mine chiefly by rum. Rum is a rival to brandy. Great numbers of the happy children of Ham—who, as my mother believes, are by Divine ordinance subject to the children of Japhet—toil in Jamaica for the house of Campion & Co. We flog slaves, in order that Britons may get drunk on health-giving rum. And we pay duty. What are we to think of a man who runs over brandy, which may be sold cheaper than rum, and is more wholesome? How do you think I have been trained to regard such a man? And now to feel that I have not only been staying in such a man's house, but that I am engaged to his adopted daughter—and that daughter the sweetest girl in the world! Lady Campion, what will you say to it?"

CHAPTER III.

A LUCKY RUN.

FROM the moment Will heard about the smuggling he began to get restless. He would follow Dan down to the beach, and talk while he looked after the boats. I knew that he was pumping Dan's adventures out of him—a process by no means difficult. Dan's anecdotes were chiefly of narrow escapes; not from revenue cutters or privateers, so much as from sea-fogs. Once in a thick fog he nearly put straight into Bridport harbour, there being at the time only a light breeze from the south-east, and a revenue cutter, armed and manned, lying within the two piers, ready to give him and his cargo a warm welcome. Another time he had to heave overboard the whole of his cargo, almost under the very nose of his pursuers. He knew the whole of the French coast, from Dunkerque to St. Malo, and was known in every port. He would drop along the shore, hugging the land, so as to look as much as possible like a fishing-smack, till he arrived at his destination; when, you may be sure, he took very little time to load and get away again. Dan was sixty years of age or thereabouts at this time, and his memory carried him back for half a century of smuggling. His father before him, and his grandfather before him, had been yeomen of Rousdon, like himself; and, like himself, mainly dependent on the illicit trade.

Now, there was hardly anything more likely to excite the imagination of a town-bred youth than a tale of a successful and hazardous run. The romance, such as it was, of highwaymen was over. There were still plenty of them, and they were always hanged when they were caught; so that they were not without some glory. But, considered as heroes, they had had their day. The degenerate successors of Claude Duval were either desperate murderers, like the Blacks of Waltham, or they were poor commonplace, ragged footpads. But the smuggler—the man who encountered the dangers of war, of storm, and of the revenue officers—was still a hero. So that

Dan leaped at once, in the estimation of Will, from a good-natured cheerful old sailor to the level of a sea-king. And this, despite the young man's early training and prejudice.

Then came evenings in which, after the violin had discoursed, we sat round the fire and talked of nothing else but old trips and their results. Countless were the questions put by Will—questions as to the French coast, the French people, their ways and their manners; as to the boat, and the navigation of the Channel; as to the danger and the delight of running fifteen knots an hour, everything made snug and taut, carrying all canvas, with heavy seas washing over the gallant little craft. I never thought what might happen. I had lived so long in an atmosphere of carelessness to danger that I had quite ceased to believe in any danger. And when Will begged Dan to take him too when he made another run, I laughed and clapped my hands, to think how he would enjoy it.

Dan made difficulties. He said it was not a young gentleman's work; that his lady mother might get to hear of it; that things might happen; that he should never be easy in his mind afterwards if anything did happen. Finally, overpersuaded by the eagerness of the young man, he acceded to his request.

We were then in the cold evenings, about the middle of October, and in the last few days of a waning moon. The weather was fine and open, with a steady south-westerly breeze springing up most nights towards sunset, and lasting till late the next morning. Dan went over to the mill to consult with Joshua, who readily resigned his place to Will, on the condition of not losing his share in the profits, should the venture be successful. I took this kindly of Joshua. I thought he must have passed into a better frame of mind, although he had not been once to the house since the day he threatened me.

Everything being arranged, and the weather favourable, they went on board at eight in the evening. I was in the dingy, carrying things backwards and forwards for them; and when Dan was satisfied that nothing had been forgotten,

I dropped into the little boat, and sat in it, watching the *Dancing Polly* slip out of the bay and glide into the darkness, while Will leaned over the taffrail and waved a farewell to me.

It was nothing unusual for me to sleep alone in the house. There was no danger of robbers in so secluded a spot as Rousdon, and there was always a sense of protection in the fact of old Isaac Agus and his wife sleeping in the cottage hard by. I had no fears for myself. Only, somehow, things were different now. I had left off thinking of myself, and thought, all day and all night, of Will. That night, for the first time, I was timid. I thought of the little boat sailing across the black Channel to the enemy's coast. I conjured up the dangers. Buonaparte might catch them; he was at Boulogne then, preparing for the invasion of England, with every craft of any kind which he could collect together. The *Dancing Polly* might be captured by a privateer; they might be arrested on the French coast; they might be wrecked. I thought of every danger except the one most likely to happen, that they might meet their difficulties on the return voyage. For the first time in my life I was afraid, and while I sat before the fire conjuring up the ghosts of possible disasters, I heard a step outside, the latch was lifted, and Joshua Meech showed himself at the door.

I thought he had been drinking. His eyes were haggard and bloodshot—those eyes of his which were too close together and too small; his face was distorted, and his fingers worked nervously together.

"They are gone?" he asked, sitting on Dan's settle, with a sort of groan.

"Yes," I replied, fearing he was come for no good. "They put out at eight. Now, Joshua, if you have anything to say, have done with it at once, and go."

"I've got this to say," he replied hoarsely. "I've been trying to put you out o' my mind and I can't. Who's Mr. Campion, that he's to come here and take away my girl?"

"I never was your girl, Joshua."

"You should have been. I'd set my heart on it. And you

shall be yet. There never was a thing that I wanted, as I did not get. I've always looked to marry you and nobody but you, and I will yet."

"Will you?" I laughed. "Never."

"Don't think I shall be an unkind husband, my pretty," he said, with a sudden change of voice and manner. "I love you too well. I shall wrap you up warm and give you nothing to do, only make yourself happy."

"Now, Joshua," I said, "go. This is enough foolishness for one night. I am going to marry Mr. Campion. Do you hear? I am going to be his wife."

"If you won't listen to fair words," he said, springing to his feet, "listen to foul. I've given you one more chance. It's your last. Will you give up that young popinjay?"

"No, I will not. Go!"

"I've warned you," he said, "and I'm desperate. Whatever happens, mind, it will be all on your own head. Whatever happens, you done it."

I had no suspicion, not the least shadow of suspicion, of what he meant. If Joshua's anger made me fear anything, it was that he might attempt some desperate deed of personal violence. At the same time, I was disquieted, and I longed for the return of the boat.

They sailed at eight, as I have said. If the breeze continued steady, they might reach the coast of France in the morning. Supposing that all went well, they would receive their cargo in a few hours, and should be back in the early morning of the following day—say from one to three o'clock, before daybreak. But that depended entirely on the wind.

All next day I was in a kind of fever. I could fix my thoughts on nothing. I said to myself: "Now they are stowing away the kegs; now Will is laughing with the Frenchmen —of course he would laugh wherever he was; now Jephthah and Job are receiving the brandy; now Dan is keeping one eye upon the sea, and another on the land; now he is thinking what sort of a run over he will have; now they have started; now they are on the open sea; now"—but here my mind grew giddy, and I could follow them no longer.

What a long and dreary day that was! I, who had never before minded being solitary, thought each hour dragged itself along more slowly than its predecessor. I went out in the little boat, but it was only to strain longing eyes across the water to see if haply I could discern the white sails of the *Dancing Polly*. But there was nothing on the ocean, and presently I rowed languidly home again, and tried to think out somehow the life that was before me. But that was difficult, because I did not know what a lady was like.

Only five in the afternoon! the whole evening and half the night before me yet! I went into the yard and talked to Isaac Agus. He said the wind was favourable, but it would freshen in the night; and then I went back to the house, as it was getting dark and chilly, lit the fire, and sat down before it, thinking.

I was in that mood when things inanimate seem to be things alive. Dan's pipe seemed to look at me with a sort of longing for Dan himself. Will's violin in the open case seemed endowed with eyes which gazed upon me and said, "Where is he, the master?" The very chairs had a sad and foreboding look. I was overcome with the shadow of impending evil.

At eight I could bear it no longer, and went to bed. The wind had freshened by this time, and was blowing freely among the boughs and branches. But it came from the right quarter, and it would have to be a big breeze to keep the *Dancing Polly* out of port when Dan wanted to make it.

Tired with the anxiety and solitude, I fell asleep the moment my head touched the pillow. That was partly from habit. I always did. It was the last night that I should ever fall into the sweet childish custom.

When I awoke from confused dreams of trouble, which took no intelligible shape, it was still in the depth of night. I could not sleep any more. My nerves were like quicksilver. I sprang from my bed, dressed hurriedly in the dark, tied a thick shawl round my head and neck, and felt my way downstairs into the open air in front of the house.

The night was absolutely black. Clouds had come up

over the sky, and there was not a ray of starlight, not a glimmer on the sea. It was only possible to make out on the left the steep outline of Pinhay cliff and on the right a little of the long line of rock. Nothing else. But the wind blew fresh into my face, and I heard the roar of the waves dragging down the shingle and rolling it up again, and that was companionship to me.

I sat there in front of the house, watching the darkness and thinking. It was better to be out in the open, listening to the voice of the waves, than boxed up in a bedroom, a prey to every sort of fear.

Presently I arose and went out in the dark, down the steep path that led to the beach. I knew every step, and needed no light to guide me over the rough way. But about halfway down I heard another step on the path below me—the step of one person. It was too dark to see anything; but I thought of Joshua. It must be Joshua come to help unload the cargo. Natural that he should come to look after the venture in which he had a share. I had no desire to speak with him, so I stayed where I was, stepping off the path, and sat down on the hillside to wait. And then—good heavens! what did it mean? there came more steps, steps in the distance, steps in the road above, the confused tramp of many feet upon the stones of the rough lane which led from Axemouth to Rousdon. Whose could these be? And what could they want, coming to Rousdon Bay at three in the morning.

I waited while they passed by the silent house. They did not stop there; evidently they had no business with its occupants; and then a pang of horror struck my heart, for I reflected that I was the only occupant; and although they might have no business with me, they might have with those who ought to have been there that night. I lay down on the rock and cautiously looked over through the branches of a bramble.

It was not so dark but that I could distinguish the figures of the men as they came down the zigzag path, and slowly felt their way along the steep and narrow way beneath me.

It was not so dark but that I could count that there were sixteen of them, and I could hear the clash of arms. Then I knew what they were, and what was their errand.

They were the revenue men; they had got intelligence of Dan's run; they were come to catch him at the moment of landing, in the very act of running his cargo ashore.

I thought, by the feel of the air and the look of the sky, that it must be near upon three o'clock—say an hour and a half before daybreak. That is to say, it was the very time which Dan would choose, had he a favourable wind, for landing. And the wind was favourable—a steady strong south-wester, before which the *Dancing Polly* would fly. There could be no doubt that she was off the coast already.

It seemed to me that there was just one chance—and only one. The revenue men were all down on the beach, at the west side of the bay, under the rocks which were carried away afterwards in the great landslip. Suppose I could get, unseen, to the point of land which ran out—just a little point—on the east, and shout an alarm at the moment when the *Dancing Polly* neared the mouth of the bay.

It was the only chance. I knew every rock, and ledge, and stone round the place. I had no need to get down by the path. I slid, jumped, and crept, working my way round the bay, so as to get to the point unnoticed.

That was easy. I daresay the men were all half-asleep; the night was very dark, and my figure could hardly be made out against the black masses of rock and overhanging brambles. I arrived at the point, and crouched behind a stone. I sat watching intently the black waves close at my feet and the black sky above me.

It grew cold, as it always does before the dawn, but I felt nothing: in the intense moments of life one does not think of such things. I prayed that Dan might be late, and that the day might break, so that he should be able to see me before he made his port. For, once in the bay, which was, as I have said, but a tiny creek, there was no room to turn, and the opportunity would be lost.

Alas! that hope failed.

While I sat watching, and almost before I had time to make her out, the *Dancing Polly* came up out of the blackness of the night, steering straight for the mouth of the bay.

I sprang up, and shrieked, and waved my arms.

"Back, Dan, back; hard-a-port!"

It was no use. Dan saw me on the port, but her bows were already in the creek. Job and Jephthah ran down the canvas, and the boat grounded on the beach.

The *Dancing Polly* had made her last run.

I ran round the bay for my life, springing from stone to stone in the dark, crying "Dan, Dan, they are waiting for you. Run, oh, run, run! Will, run!"

There was a shout, a rush, the sudden flashing of dark lanterns. "In the King's name," shouted a rough voice, "surrender!"

When I got round they had secured their prisoners. All four were handcuffed, and the men were standing round them in a ring. I broke through them, still shrieking my useless warning, and fell crying upon Dan's neck.

"I heard you, my pretty," said the poor old man, "but it was too late. You done your best, but it was too late."

I hugged him and kissed him, crying and weeping. Then I remembered Will.

"He is a passenger," I said to the officer; "let him go. He only went to look on. He is a stranger here. He is not a smuggler, he is a gentleman."

"He is my prisoner," said the officer, "and must go with the rest. Fall in, men. Ready! March!"

The men had their cutlasses drawn, but there was no bloodshed, as there was no resistance. Dan was not one of the desperadoes who carried pistols, and arranged beforehand for an armed band of villagers to help him in landing the cargo. Moreover, resistance to the king's officers, in those days, meant death.

I followed the procession up the path. When we arrived in front of the house—poor deserted house, never again to receive all its occupants!—Dan asked permission for a halt.

"Pleasance, my pretty," said Dan, "go and bring out a glass

of brandy for this gentleman, and one all round for these brave lads and for us prisoners. 'Tis brandy, your honour, as never——— "

"I know, I know," said the officer, laughing. "Well, we will halt for the brandy."

I served them all, beginning with the officer, and going from him to the men. It was now daybreak, and, in the cold grey light, I recognised all their faces. I knew every one of them. I had seen them at Bridport, at Seaton, and elsewhere, when I went to look out for the revenue cutter. One of them was a Lyme man, a cousin of John Beer the barber.

"There," said Dan, when the brandy had gone round, "now go in, my pretty, and get to sleep, and don't fret. Where are we going, sir?"

"To Lyme first, then to Bridport. After that, I suppose you will be sent up to Dorchester to take your trial."

"I shall walk to Lyme with you," I said.

No opposition was made. Arrived at the high-road, the prisoners were made to walk together in the middle, all handcuffed, and guarded by the men with drawn cutlasses. I noticed that they all tried to march next to Dan, and to whisper in his ear. The whispers were friendly expressions of sympathy and regret.

"How did they know I should run into Rousdon Bay to-night?" asked Dan of one of them.

The man shook his head. He knew nothing about it. "Some informer," he supposed, with a muttered curse against all informers.

I walked beside Will. He was trying to face the situation, which was very serious.

"I shall be committed for trial with the rest, Pleasance. Be brave, my girl; it will be only a term of imprisonment, no doubt. We shall fight it through. But my mother must not know."

"O Will! they won't send you to prison?"

"I doubt they must, my dear. I must think what is best to be done for all of us, as well as for myself. You would not like me to escape at the expense of the poor old man, would you!"

There was no reply possible to this. Of course, I would not, in my right mind. Just then, however, it seemed as if even Dan might go, provided my Will could be got out of the scrape.

We marched down the steep hill which leads into Lyme at about half-past five. The little town was sound asleep. When we reached the house of Mr. Mallock, justice of the peace, a halt was called, and the officer began to knock lustily at the door.

His worship was not dressed. Could we come later on?

We could not; the case was imperative. His worship must be good enough to get out of bed and receive us at once.

We all trooped into the narrow hall, and stood there together waiting for about ten minutes, when the magistrate came slowly downstairs, wrapped in a dressing-gown, wearing a nightcap instead of a wig, and grumbling as he slowly descended the stairs. He was a portly old gentleman with purple cheeks, eyes which might be described as goggle, and full lips. I knew him for one of Dan's best customers. The hue of those cheeks was not due to fresh air and exercise, but to port and old French brandy.

The narrow hall was nearly dark, lit only by a single tallow candle, carried by the maid who admitted us. The worthy justice looked round him with angry wonder.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "what is this? Why am I to be pulled out of my bed on a cold morning like this? Is Buonaparte landed? Have you got a French spy? Well—who is in command of you?"

"I am, Mr. Mallock, if you will allow me to speak," said the officer.

"Allow you, sir—I am waiting for you. I am up at this ungodly hour on purpose to hear you speak. Mary, go bring a pair of candles to the dining-room. Now, sir, speak."

"I am Lieutenant Pollard, Mr. Mallock and———"

"O Pollard!—I am sorry I did not recognise you. What with the darkness here—Mary, do fetch those lights—and the confusion of one's wits at this disturbance—pray excuse

me. What does it mean, Pollard? We were wishing for you last night, over as good a glass of brandy as ever Dan———"

Here the captain interrupted him with great alacrity.

"I am here, Mr. Mallock, officially, as officer in command of his Majesty's revenue cutter, the *Teazer*. These are my men; these four are my prisoners. Prisoners, step forward!"

"Dan Gulliver!" cried the magistrate, as the lights were brought, and he could see our faces, "you a prisoner? Dear me, dear me!"

"I ask that the prisoners may be committed for trial, at the next Dorchester assizes, on a charge of smuggling. We caught them in the act."

"Ta—ta—ta! Fair and easy," said the magistrate. "You forget, sir, that I am to hear the case. This way—this way. O Dan Gulliver! what a blow! what a blow for all of us!"

He led the way into the dining-room, where was his great chair of justice, in which he placed himself.

"Caught, sir, landing a cargo of brandy in Rousdon Bay," said the officer. "Do you wish to hear evidence?"

"Evidence, sir? Of course I wish to hear evidence, and all the evidence you have to offer, I can assure you. Do you think that respectable people—yeomen—substantial farmers, like my friend Dan Gulliver and his sons—are to be haled off to prison on your *ipse dixit?* Ta—ta—ta! Call your evidence."

There was a general smile at the mention of Dan's occupation. Everybody, of course, knew exactly what his calling was. Even the officer, Lieutenant Pollard, drank no brandy except what came from Dan's secret cellars.

One after the other, the men were called forward by the lieutenant. Each deposed the same thing. They had marched to Rousdon Bay by order of the Captain, meaning Lieutenant Pollard; they had waited under shelter of the cliff from two o'clock till four, or thereabouts; then the *Dancing Polly* had sailed into the bay, and they had captured the crew, consisting of the four prisoners.

When the lieutenant had called half-a-dozen witnesses, the justice asked him if he had anything else to depose.

"Nothing more," replied the officer. "Isn't that enough? You can hear the same story from the whole sixteen."

"No, sir," said the magistrate—and I thought I saw a twinkle in his eye as he raised the important objection—"no, sir; it is not enough. You have proved to me that Dan Gulliver and the three other prisoners were on board a boat which you believe to be, and which, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we may assume to be, the *Dancing Polly*. You had an undoubted right, as an officer of his Majesty's revenue, to board that vessel. Where, in my opinion, you exceeded your duty was in seizing the prisoners; for you have not proved that there was anything on board to justify that violent measure. Prove smuggling, sir, or I shall let the prisoners go, and dismiss the case."

There was a sensation in the court. The officer looked down abashed. He had actually, in his zeal to seize a well-known and notorious smuggler, omitted the most necessary portion of his case—proof of the contraband carriage. He was actually so eager to bring his prisoners to the magistrate, that he forgot to carry with him his *pièces de conviction*.

"Under the circumstances, therefore," said the justice, with a great sigh of relief, "I shall dismiss the prisoners, unless you can at once produce evidence of smuggling."

Dan smiled. Will laughed aloud. Job and Jephthah nudged each other with their elbows, and became solemn beyond what is natural in young men. Lieutenant Pollard looked—if one can say so of a gallant officer who afterwards fell fighting the battles of his country—foolish.

"I could send back to Rousdon Bay," he said, "and cause to be brought kegs from the cargo of the *Dancing Polly*."

"Tush, man!" said the justice. "Who is to prove that those kegs were there when you boarded the craft?"

The revenue men looked at each other and laughed, glad to find that Dan Gulliver was going to escape their friend and greatest enemy. Only the captain looked disconcerted.

"And now," said Mr. Mallock, rising from his judicial throne, "we may dismiss this case. I hope, Pollard, that next time you drag me out of bed in the middle of the night,

it will be with a better case than this. Dan Gulliver, the next time you go fishing in the *Dancing Polly*, you had better ask Lieutenant Pollard to go with you. And now, I think, I shall go upstairs and have my sleep out."

We all thought the case was over and the cause won, when a young fellow, one of the sixteen, Skirling by name—he was a Weymouth man, no man nearer than Weymouth would have willingly testified against Dan—stepped forward and spoke, with many stammers and with much hesitation.

"Beg your honour's pardon. I broached one of the kegs in the dark. I filled this here bottle"—he held out a flat bottle, two-thirds emptied—"with John Beer there"—everybody looked reproachfully at John Beer, the cousin of our Lyme barber—"and we drank it together."

"Swear this man," said the justice, sitting down again.

They gave him the oath, and he repeated his evidence. The worthy magistrate tried to cross-examine him; but it was useless. The presence of the brandy could not otherwise be accounted for.

Then they called on John Beer, and that young fellow, with blushes and much unwillingness, was fain to confirm the statement.

The justice of the peace made no further opposition.

"It must be," he said, with a choke in his voice. "It is in the hope, Dan Gulliver, and you others, Job Gulliver, Jephthah Gulliver, and William Campion, all described as common mariners, that you will have a speedy deliverance, and quickly return to your—your farming and the rest of it, that I sign this document. The law is uncertain. Times are hard. Honest men cannot be spared. Ah, it is a terrible misfortune! And at this juncture, too, when good brandy is almost not to be had, and my own cellar, I regret to say, entirely empty!"

So they were all committed for trial, and bail refused.

Early as it was, the whole population of Lyme was in the streets to witness, in sympathy and sorrow, the departure of Dan Gulliver and his sons—caught at last—for Dorchester jail. Loud were the lamentations, and deep were the curses which were uttered on the unknown informer who had wrought

this evil. They put us in a waggon and we drove off—no one refusing to let me go too—to Bridport and Dorchester; the dreariest journey I ever made in my life, except one even more sorrowful, which was to come later.

There happened, after the reluctant justice had granted his warrant, a very strange thing, and one which caused the sides of all Lyme Regis to shake with laughing. We heard the news ourselves two days afterwards.

Lieutenant Pollard, ashamed of his own haste, which was almost the cause of a miscarriage of justice, despatched four of his men to seize the cargo and the boat, and to bring them round to the cove at Lyme. Both boat and cargo were the prize of the captors; and a very tidy haul the prize would prove.

The men, by their own account, lost no time in marching back to Rousdon. It was about eight o'clock when they got to the farm. Here they found Isaac Agus at work in the yard, and his wife in the dairy, and no one else about the place. Unsuspiciously they descended the hill and boarded their prize.

The *Dancing Polly* was empty.

The whole of her cargo was gone. Not one keg left; not a single trace of any brandy at all; the prize snatched from under their very eyes.

The men looked at each other aghast. It had been grief to most of them to arrest old Dan at all; he had ever been a good friend to all who wanted a little cheap spirit; but this laudable repugnance to perform the more ungrateful portion of their duties was moderated by the prospect of a prize. The *Dancing Polly* as she stood with all her gear was worth something, no doubt. And then there was the brandy.

They looked at each other in dismay. Where was it? Without a word they turned and climbed the hill to the farm. Here Isaac Agus was placidly engaged among the pigs.

He was hard of hearing and slow of speech, but at length he was made to comprehend that unknown persons had been at work in the bay since daybreak, and that he was wanted to say who they were.

He knew nothing. At the usual hour—that is, before daybreak—he had left his bed, and since then had been busy in the farmyard. The absence of Dan and the boys gave him no concern, because it frequently happened: and he was, in his slow way, amazed to learn that they were all then, with the stranger, on their road to Dorchester prison.

But he knew nothing. The simple look of the old man, his deafness, his slowness of comprehension, convinced the men that he knew nothing. Then they returned to the bay, and stood sadly contemplating their empty prize. "Sure for certain," said one, "folks 'll laugh at us."

"Well they may," said another.

Then nature, which brings relief in different ways, gave these honest fellows theirs in a volley of oaths, a broadside of oaths, fired by all together. They swore at the unknown informer, in the first instance, for causing them to meddle with Dan Gulliver at all; and then at the unknown brigands who had robbed the cargo; and then at the captain, for being in such a mighty hurry; and then at things in general.

Before they had anything like finished swearing—so, that is, as to feel easy and comfortable in their minds about the past, and philosophic as to the future—the thought occurred to one of them that one of the thieves might have been the fourth partner in the firm, Joshua Meech, of Up Lyme Mill.

It would be an excellent conclusion to the business to find that heroic smuggler in the act of carting the kegs, or stowing them away in the mill. They lost no time in marching over the fields to the mill.

It was ten o'clock when they got there; the wheel was slowly turning; the water plashed into the deep dark hole below; the grinding of the upper and the netherstone were heard within; an empty waggon was standing by the door, ready to be loaded; and at the door was Joshua Meech himself.

His coat and flat cap, his boots, his face, were covered with flour. He asked them roughly what they wanted.

When he heard that Dan was arrested, he seemed to reel and catch at the doorway. When he heard that the cargo had

all disappeared, he laughed, but without merriment. And then he invited the men to search the mill.

There was nothing there.

"And so my uncle is caught," he said, "and the boys with him?"

"Ay, ay, all of them."

"Life is uncertain," said the Methody; "we are like the grass. Poor Job and Jephthah! And there was a young man with them. Was he, too, caught?"

"All caught."

"Was there any resistance?"

"The old man and his sons, they were quiet enough," replied one of the men. "The other young fellow—he kicked and fought a bit."

"Did he, now?" cried Joshua, with much interest. "Did he? That was rash. Because resistance to the king's officers is death. That's a hanging matter. The other three will get off with seven years' transportation. But he'll be hanged. Dear me! How very sad!"

He smacked his lips as if he liked the thought. Some people do like to dwell on melancholy subjects.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING'S CLEMENCY.

IT was late in the evening when we got to Dorchester. The prison gates closed upon all that I called dear, and I was left outside.

The young man, John Beer, the same whose appetite for brandy had done us so much mischief, found me a lodging with respectable people; and I waited in trouble of soul for the morning.

At nine, after waiting outside for two long hours, I obtained admission to the prison. I went in trembling, and expected to see the prisoners jangling their chains in despair. I looked for sighs and prayers, for the tears of repentance and the groans of remorse. I found nothing of the kind. The court-

yard was half full of men, who were all laughing, talking, drinking, and singing. Some of them wore fetters. One man alone was dejected. He sat crouched up in a corner, his head upon his hand. I learned afterwards that he was in prison on account of a debt contracted for a friend, which he had no means of paying. Outside the prison his wife and children were starving, and he could give them no help. The law, cruel and stupid, would keep him there until out of his destitution and wretchedness he should pay. So that he was doomed to a life-long imprisonment. But Will remedied that later on. The most dare-devil fellows were a jolly band of three, waiting their trial on a charge of highway robbery, for which they were all hanged a few weeks afterwards, preserving to the last their jovial spirits, and exhibiting an example to all the world how brave men ought to face death.

My own party were not in the courtyard. Dan Gulliver and his sons were no common criminals. They had obtained, on payment of certain fees, the use of a ward all to themselves, where I found them. It was a large and cheerful room, but disfigured by the odious bars over the windows. Dan was pacing backwards and forwards; Job and Jephthah were sitting side by side in one corner, their hands folded, in silence and resignation; Will was at the table, writing.

"We must be very clear and precise about this statement, Dan," he was saying. "There must be no possible misunderstanding. They must be made to see that this is no cock-and-bull story, got up by us to help us out of our scrape."

Dan nodded reflectively.

"Now, this is what I have written—Pleasance, you are come to see us in our temporary home. Limited the accommodation, but we must make the best of it. Sit down, child, while we finish our business—now, Dan:

"'This is the statement of me, Daniel Gulliver, of Rousdon Farm, parish of Rousdon, near the town of Lyme Regis.

"'On Wednesday evening, October 21st, in this year 1803, I was on board my boat, the *Dancing Polly*, off the coast of France, homeward bound. I was running a cargo of brandy,

in the landing of which I was caught and arrested by the revenue officers, and am now, with my two sons and a young man who was staying in my house, committed for trial for that offence.

"'We took in our cargo at Barfleur, on Wednesday morning. We started, the wind being then light, but afterwards freshening, and S.E. by S.; a favourable wind for us, but bad for the ships we met later on in the Channel.

"'Ten miles, or thereabouts, due north from Point Barfleur they were—three men-o'-war, eight frigates, and small craft. They were beating up Channel, apparently west by north, though the wind was dead against them, and they were flying French colours.

"'On the *Dancing Polly* we were about half a mile to starboard of the enemy's fleet. One of the ships hailed us to haul down and lay to; but we held on, seeing the breeze was freshening, and all in our favour.

"'At three o'clock or so we made Rousdon Bay, intending to send on news of the enemy's fleet as soon as we could. Unfortunately we were caught by the officers, and arrested. So I have lost no time in putting on paper the observations we made as to the whereabouts of the enemy.

"'I am in the hope that this intelligence may prove of use to his Majesty's government, and that the diligence I have used in forwarding it immediately may be taken into account against the fact of my having broken the law in my venture to the French coast.'"

"I don't think, Dan," said Will, after carefully reading the whole, "that we can do much more good to the document. There is the information, fresh and valuable and trustworthy. Nelson would like it, if the officials do not; but they would not dare to shelve it. And now, Dan, you must sign."

Dan Gulliver, after making the careful preparations for writing common to people of that time, unaccustomed to sign their names, perpetrated a form which he meant to stand for Daniel Gulliver, while Job and Jephthah looked on in silent admiration. Anything their father did was great and beautiful. For that parental respect I honour their memory.

That done, "Now, Pleasance," said Will, who had taken the entire command of the business, "please go into the town, ascertain who is the best lawyer in the town—the gentlefolk's lawyer. Go call at his office, and bring him here without a moment's delay."

"Tell him not to fear about money, for there is plenty under the hearthstone," said Dan.

It was not difficult to find the best lawyer in Dorchester. Everybody sent me to Mr. Copas. I found him an elderly gentleman, who wore a large wig, and looked like a dignitary of the church.

"This sort of case does not lie in the ordinary course of my practice," he said; "I recommend you to go to Mr. Ferret, whose clients chiefly consist of——"

"I think, sir," I said, "that when you know who one of the smugglers is, you will not refuse to act for us. Pray, pray come and see him! And, oh! if it is the money you are thinking of, Dan says there is plenty of money under the hearthstone."

Mr. Copas smiled.

"It had better be in the bank, child. Well, I will go with you. But I do not promise anything."

We found Will alone in the ward, still busy with paper and pen. He was graver than usual, as was only natural, but when his eyes met mine he smiled in his quiet and sympathetic way.

"Now, my good fellow," said Mr. Copas, in a patronising and friendly tone, "tell me what you have to say; but do not waste time, and tell the truth."

"What I have to say is, Mr. Copas," said Will, "that I am a gentleman who has got into a scrape with three most worthy smugglers."

"A gentleman? Well, you do not look like a sailor. But go on."

"My name is Campion. I am the only son of the late Sir Godfrey Campion, and the chief partner in the firm of——"

"Good heavens! And you a smuggler?"

"Well, not exactly. But I went for a venture with Dan Gulliver, and we were all caught. That is the story."

"But you—you, my dear sir—the influence of your family must be brought to bear. Your case must be separated."

Here Will interposed.

"I cannot separate my case from the poor fellows with me," he said. "I cannot have any family interest employed, because, above all, my mother must not know of this—this disgrace. I shall stand my trial with the others. Fortunately"—he took up the papers which he had written and Dan had signed—"I have something here which ought to procure us an absolute pardon. It is secret intelligence for the Admiralty. We sighted the French fleet on our way back, and we can report on the enemy's course. Now, Mr. Copas, can you find me a trusty messenger? You can? Then let him ride as hard as horses can carry him. Let him ride without stopping, let him get to London before midnight. He must be armed with a letter from you and one from the mayor."

"I am the mayor."

"Good. The letter must simply give the date of our capture, and state that the document is signed by a man well-known in Lyme, perfectly trustworthy, although now in jail on a charge of smuggling."

Mr. Copas hastened away with the papers.

"They ought to let us go at once without a trial," said Will the sanguine. "Sit down and look cheerful, Pleasance dear. Why, we can make love as well in a prison-ward as under Pinhay cliff. Let me kiss the tears from your pretty eyes, my peerless woodland nymph."

We had a fortnight to wait for the assizes. No answer came from the Admiralty, nor any sign that we were all to be acquitted without a trial. Meantime Mr. Copas engaged the best counsel on the circuit, no less a man than the great Serjeant Jamblin, king's counsel, for our defence. As for Joshua Meech, he did not once come to see us—an act of prudence which, while Dan commended it, was surprising to him. To be sure, as Dan said, it was only by chance that he wasn't caught with the rest. And when I told him of the single step I had heard before the revenue men came down the hill, he surmised that it was Joshua, and divined the secret of the

empty hold. Who but Joshua could have cleared out the cargo in so expeditious and crafty a manner? Who but Joshua would have been so thoughtful of the interests of the firm?

The court, on the day of the trial, was crowded with spectators, principally people from Lyme and Bridport who knew Dan Gulliver. I listened with dismay to their talk, for it was nothing but speculation as to what the punishment would be.

Everything frightened me—the cold stiff court, with the constables and the javelin-men; the people in the galleries, who seemed eager for the show to begin; the horrid dock; the witness-box, where I knew the evidence of our guilt would be overpowering; the barristers, who arrived just before ten in their wigs and gowns, and talked and laughed as if there was nothing to come of the day's work but a fight in words among themselves; the empty seat of the judge; the clerk below with his papers.

I came with Mr. Copas, who provided me with a seat below the dock, so that I could shake hands with the prisoners.

Presently our man, our advocate, the great Serjeant Jamblin, K.C., afterwards Sir Peter Jamblin, one of his Majesty's judges, came into court. He was followed by a clerk bearing a bag full of papers. I noticed that he nodded, but did not shake hands with Mr. Copas. Yet he shook hands with every member of the bar in the court. I believe that in those days it was not considered right for a barrister to shake hands with an attorney.

Presently he left the table and came to me.

"I have heard of you, Miss Noel," he said. "Pray let me shake hands with you. Mr. Copas has told me the whole history. I am only sorry that your gallant attempt to warn Dan Gulliver did not succeed. I am not sure, but I am in great hopes that we shall get them off altogether—one and all, you know; they were in the same boat. But if we cannot then I may tell you that a little bird has whispered good news in my ear. A lord, high placed, has interested himself in the case. Courage, my dear young lady."

This was very kind of the serjeant. He was not, to look at, a man from whom such kind things were to be expected; for

he had a harsh and strident voice, full projecting lips, and staring eyes. Also he had very red cheeks, and a way of pushing back his wig which showed that he was already quite bald. But when, years afterwards, I heard people talk of the harsh and overbearing way of Judge Jamblin, I remembered that he had once taken pity on a poor girl in grievous trouble, and said words of comfort to her.

Then there was a blare of trumpets, and presently the whole court rose to greet the judge.

Now, I firmly believe that, if we had had any other judge in all England to try the case, or if this particular judge had not been attacked the day before with gout in his great toe, so signal was the service rendered by Dan to the Government, that we should have all got off with a free pardon. But the day was unlucky. Our judge, never the most kindly of men, was in a bad temper that morning. His face was pale, austere, and gloomy. His eyes had a fishy stare in them, which was due to his thinking more of his great toe than of the arguments going on before him. He was very old; he had been a judge many years; he had sentenced so many people to death, to transportation, to imprisonment, that he had got to regard crime as a sort of disease, and himself as a doctor who administered a remedy, or declared the case hopeless.

He seated himself, and the preliminaries began.

The jury were all Dorchester men; no man of Lyme would have brought a verdict against Dan. As for the prisoners, Dan came first. He leaned over the bars of the dock to kiss me when he took his place. Nobody could have looked more innocent than he, with his steadfast eyes, his grey locks, and his calm face. Job and Jephthah, who followed, stood staring straight before them, as if the court had nothing whatever to do with them—as if it were not there at all, in fact. Will came last. He passed his hand over the dock to press mine, and smiled in his old way; but he was flushed, and his lip trembled as he stood before them all, a gentleman in the guise of a common sailor, about to be tried for breaking the laws of his country.

Then the counsel for the prosecution rose and opened the case. He began by saying that the jury had before them a gang of notorious and hitherto unpunished smugglers, men who lived by defying the laws of the land. He congratulated the court on being able at last to bring these men to justice. He should prove—and here he set forth the whole facts, during which Serjeant Jamblin leaned back and occasionally whispered to one of the junior counsel, with a depreciatory smile.

When the counsel for the prosecution had finished, he called his witnesses.

Lieutenant Pollard was the first. From information received he stationed himself, with a company of sixteen men, in Rousdon Bay at midnight on Thursday, October 22nd. About four o'clock in the morning the *Dancing Polly* rounded the point and stood in for the creek. At the moment of landing he effected the arrest.

This was all, substantially, that he had to say. Then the serjeant rose and began to tear him to pieces.

"Where did you get your information, Lieutenant Pollard?"

"That, with his lordship's permission, I decline to state."

The court ruled that the question need not be asked.

"I was only anxious, my lord," said the serjeant, smiling sweetly, "for the witness's own sake, to prove that a British officer is incapable of employing any of those despicable persons who live by betraying the sins or follies of their fellowmen."

Here the gallant officer reddened, and looked uncomfortable.

"We will go on," said the serjeant. "What did this villainous informer tell you?"

"That the notorious smuggler, Dan Gulliver, would attempt a run over from the French coast on that particular night, laden with brandy."

"Ah! Remember, Lieutenant Pollard, you are on oath. Every word which you say is on oath. Pray, why 'notorious smuggler?'"

The witness laughed.

"Everybody knows that he is a notorious smuggler."

"I care nothing about everybody knowing; do you know?"

"Of course, I know."

"How do you know?"

"By general report."

"So, if general report proclaimed you a murderer, a thief, or anything else, you must of necessity be that kind of criminal?"

The witness was silent. Of course he could not be expected to state that he had often partaken of the Gulliver brandy, and had, indeed, purchased it.

"Has the elder prisoner, or any of the prisoners, indeed, ever been convicted of smuggling?"

"No."

"Have you ever seen them smuggling?"

"Never before."

"Do you, then, still persist in that expression, 'notorious smuggler?'"

The witness hesitated.

"I suppose I must withdraw it," he said.

"He withdraws it, gentlemen of the jury. Remark, if you please, that the witness has never, he says, known of any smuggling on the part of the prisoners. Let the injurious presumption raised in your minds by my learned brother's opening speech, and perhaps confirmed by the careless, baseless expressions of a prejudiced witness, be immediately dismissed. We have to do with one charge, and one alone. Now, sir, your best attention, if you please. You say you caught this man smuggling, do you?"

"I do."

"What was he smuggling?"

"Brandy."

"How do you know?"

"One of my men opened a keg."

"And purloined, being in the revenue service, spirit which he supposed to be smuggled. Has that man been brought to justice?"

"He has not."

"Were there other kegs?"

"I did not see."

"When your men returned for their prize, what did they find?"

"Nothing. The craft had been cleared in their absence."

The next witness was James Skirling, who had opened the keg.

He gave his evidence in as few words as possible, and was then in his turn submitted to cross-examination.

"I understand you," said the serjeant, in slow and awful tones, "to inform the court that you took advantage of the darkness and confusion to broach a keg, actually, to broach a keg, and fill a bottle."

"I did."

"You stole that liquor, in fact; you placed it in this bottle?" He held up the fatal flask.

The man grinned.

"Don't laugh at me, sir; don't dare to laugh at the court. Many a poor fellow is lying in Newgate at this moment, and will be hanged by the neck, for no worse an offence. Worse? Far, far lighter. They stole, being common rogues. You betrayed a trust, being reputedly an honest officer. Tell the court again, sir. Did you, or did you not, steal the brandy?"

He stammered in confused accents that he did.

"You took the bottle with you, I suppose, on purpose to steal it if you got the chance?"

"I did."

"There is a pretty rogue for you!" cried the serjeant, throwing himself back and sticking his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets. "Here is a villain in grain! he deliberately plans a robbery, deliberately executes it, and in open court boasts of it. My lord, I must ask for the prosecution of this rogue. In the interests of the country such a rogue must be hanged. His punishment would be beneficial to the public morals. I am not sure that I ought not to ask for the pro-

secution of his superior officer—if not as *particeps criminis*, then as conniving at and stifling the crime."

He turned again to the terrified witness, whose legs trembled beneath him, while his cheek was of a ghastly pallor.

"You took one keg and you opened it; you found brandy in it; you stole some of that brandy. Pray, were there other kegs?"

"There were; I saw them by the light of my dark lantern."

"Good. Did you open those kegs?"

"No."

"Were those kegs ever examined?"

"No; they were all cleared out while we were marching the prisoners away."

"You have no knowledge what they contained?"

"Brandy, of course," said the man, picking up his courage a little.

"You will swear, without knowing the facts, that they contained brandy?"

"How could——?"

"Answer my question. Can you swear that they contained brandy?"

"No."

"They may have contained butter. We all know the excellence of French butter. Will you swear that they did not contain butter?"

"No."

One or two other witnesses were examined, who all swore to the same facts. One thing was clear, that had it not been for that unlucky little bottle of brandy, the prosecution would have broken down completely.

Three witnesses for character were called.

The principal evidence was the Rev. Benjamin Burden, rector of Rousdon. The poor old rector, a veritable peasant-priest, stood in the witness-box clad in his tattered cassock and his battered old wig, yet bearing upon him the dignity of his sacred calling. The serjeant handled him with much softness and delicacy. He made him inform the court that he was the rector of Rousdon, that its population was eleven, that

his stipend was thirty-five pounds, and that his church was a barn. This melancholy condition of things moved the jury in his favour, and dissipated the bad effect which might otherwise have been produced upon a fat and well-fed jury, clad in strong broadcloth, by his rags and his evident poverty.

The counsel went on to elicit from the rector that Dan Gulliver was his churchwarden, and that with his two sons he kept the church in such repair as made divine service possible. The clergyman added, quite simply and with dignity, that Dan Gulliver was a worthy and religious man, who lived the life of a true Christian.

The serjeant emphasised these replies, one after the other, each with a wave of his hand towards the jury, as much as to say: "You hear this, gentlemen; you will remember the evidence of this holy minister of religion."

The evidence of the good old man, however, lost its whole weight when the counsel for the prosecution asked him one or two questions in a different direction.

He said—

"I fear, Mr. Burden, that the lamentable exiguity of your income must shut you out from the enjoyment of many of our choicest blessings—port wine, for instance?"

The rector shook his head sadly.

"I believe that I remember the taste of port," he said, "but I cannot be sure—it is so long since I saw any."

"Brandy cannot altogether replace port, can it?" asked the barrister.

"It cannot," said the rector.

"Yet I dare say you get brandy, at least sometimes?"

"I do," said the rector.

"As a present now? from a parishioner?"

"I have had it given to me," said the rector, "by my churchwarden, Dan Gulliver."

"I will not ask you," said the counsel, "whence you imagine this brandy to be derived. I prefer to think that you ask no questions, and have no suspicions. It would be too much to believe that a divine of your age and position should countenance the practice of smuggling."

Then followed other witnesses, and more fencing.

Presently the counsel for the Crown made his speech. It was very short. "Here," he said, "was a man, with his two sons, and a stranger, probably a hired hand. The man was well-known to be a smuggler—so well known that he was afraid Lyme Regis was to a man in alliance with him to defeat the ends of justice, and shielded him steadily in his runs to and from the coast of France. He was caught, so to speak, red-handed.

"It was impossible to resist the conviction, that the rest of the kegs which composed the cargo contained, like the one which had been opened, brandy. Of course it was open to any one to maintain the improbable. His learned brother might ask them to believe that these four men had crossed the Channel, and landed on an enemy's coast, in quest of potatoes, cabbages, fruit, butter, or any other marketable article. The undisputed facts were, that here was a man with a fast-sailing craft and a fishing-boat—what was the object of the former? That his most intimate friends admitted that they received brandy as a present from him. Where did he procure that brandy? That he was notoriously a smuggler by profession. As regarded the evidence of the man Skirling, the actual fact could not be disputed, although the act itself showed a low tone of morality, which all would regret to find existing in so respectable a body as the revenue service. No doubt the gallant officer who had effected the arrest with so much promptitude and courage, although with a little indiscretion, would take cognisance of the offence in his official capacity. Finally, he asked the jury to gave a verdict for the prosecution, and so to strike terror into the hearts of other evil-doers and defiers of the law."

When our counsel's turn came, he made a most eloquent and indignant speech. According to him, Dan Gulliver, the much maligned, was an admirable specimen of a class which formed, he said, the backbone of our country; he was a yeoman, farming the few acres which formed his paternal estate, and living frugally with his sons and an adopted daughter, in a cottage upon his own land. For fishing pur-

poses he had two boats, one of them, called the *Dancing Polly*, being a remarkably fast sailer. On this particular night he had been along the coast picking up, no doubt, a cargo of butter and eggs, or it might be fish, and such harmless matters, and proposing to return to Rousdon Bay, a little creek or inlet of the sea immediately below his farm.

Here he protested against the assumption that the expedition had been across the Channel. "How can you prove it? How came the suspicion to arise? Was it likely that in so small a vessel, at that stormy period of the year, four men would venture on a voyage so dangerous? What is more common than a trading voyage along the coast? What more reasonable to suppose than that a small farmer with a taste for sailing and boating should carry on such a trade? At least, gentlemen, till the contrary is proved, you have no right to suppose that the object of keeping the *Dancing Polly* was a criminal one."

Daniel Gulliver, he went on to say, was accompanied by the two boys and a stranger. No secrecy was observed about the expedition, and some idle or malignant person, one of those creeping things which infest every society of men, thought it worth while to communicate the proposed voyage to Lieutenant Pollard, that gallant officer whose discretion was not equal to his zeal, and whose eagerness to protect his Majesty's revenue led him to overlook the fact, that you must not arrest a man on suspicion and charge him with smuggling, unless you can prove it. "For, gentlemen," he said, "what actual proof have we? This"—he held up the half-empty pint-bottle of brandy—"this is the mighty proof. A small half-pint of spirit, which smells to me, gentlemen"—he took out the cork and smelt it cautiously—"which smells to me, I confess, of rum, rather than of brandy—is all the proof, absolutely the only proof that we have. In the dead of a dark night, a man whose object is theft, hurriedly steals this spirit from the hold of the vessel, and swears that he saw other kegs, the contents of which are unknown. The place is most retired and secluded. They carry off their prisoners, the officer never once thinking of examining the boat. When

they send back for that purpose there is nothing at all in the boat. Mind, gentlemen, no one had been there. Yet the boat was in ballast. That is a very remarkable circumstance. That is a very suspicious circumstance. That is a circumstance which in my mind renders entirely valueless the evidence of the man—the chief witness—whose only value was that it seemed to afford a basis for assumption of guilt. Remember, gentlemen, again, that the only proof of guilt is a half-pint of rum, or some such spirit, in a bottle—a half-pint—about enough to amuse a gentleman between a bottle of port and bedtime; and on that half-pint you are asked to convict this honest, religious, and God-fearing yeoman, with his two innocent boys, and a young man of whom no harm whatever is known, and therefore none should be suspected."

When all was done the judge summed up. It was most unfortunate for us that his gout rendered him ill-tempered and sour. He went through the evidence bit by bit, pointed out how simple it was, how clearly an act of smuggling was proved, and showed them that they ought to consider not the amount smuggled but the intention. As for the prisoners, the judge said he had no doubt about their being all habitual criminals. As for the rest of the cargo, the judge said he had no doubt whatever that it was entirely composed of French brandy.

The jury were dismissed; they were away for five minutes only; they came back with a unanimous verdict—

"Guilty, but recommended to mercy on the ground of the elder prisoner's otherwise good character and the youth of the others."

"Prisoners at the bar," said the judge, "you have heard the verdict of the jury. With that verdict I entirely agree. Have you anything further to say?"

Dan cleared his throat and spoke.

"Only that your lordship was quite right," he said. "There was brandy in them kegs. That is all."

There was a general laugh, and even the judge smiled austerely.

"I am glad that you admit your guilt. You are recom-

mended to mercy. Under other circumstances, I should have inflicted the full penalty of seven years' transportation. But I am instructed from another and a higher quarter, that you, Daniel Gulliver, have conferred a service which may be of importance to the country. In return for this you and your party will experience the king's clemency. I am also anxious to take into account the good character which you have received from your rector and others. If I could believe that this run of yours was a solitary venture, I would have inflicted a nominal sentence upon you. But it was not. You know that you have been systematically engaged in breaking the law. You have brought up your sons in your own footsteps. The laws of England must not be broken with impunity. The sentence of the court therefore is, that you and your two sons and the fourth prisoner, William Campion, do serve his Majesty on board the royal fleet for the space of three years. During that time you will not be debarred from receiving such pay, rewards, prize-money, and promotions as may be considered your just due. The *Dancing Polly* is, of course, the prize of Lieutenant Pollard."

Dan looked at Will, not at his two sons, as if to see what he thought of it. Will put up his finger as if enjoining silence.

"We thank your lordship," Dan said. "God save the king!"

He stooped over the dock to kiss me.

"Remember the hearthstone, my pretty," he whispered, "and keep up your heart, and wait for us in patience. We shall come home again. The Lord bless thee!"

But it was Will who held me tightest.

"Be patient, dear," he whispered, "patient and true. Good-bye!"

Then they removed the prisoners, and Mr. Copas took me out of the court.

Next day he sent me in a carriage back to Lyme.

It was in the evening that I arrived. Joshua Meech was in the street. He was dressed in black, and had evidently just come out of his meeting-house, so that he was playing his third part.

"Dispensations!" he groaned, holding up both his hands. "O Pleasance, let us kiss the rod. Three years aboard the royal fleet! What a sentence for a young gentleman! Ropes'-ends and cat-o'-nine-tails, with salt junk. 'Tis the chastisement of Providence."

"Do not come near me, Joshua," I said fiercely, thinking of his last visit to me. "For three years I shall see no one."

"Grievous, grievous dispensations!" he replied, holding up both hands and shaking his head. But there was the joy of revenge in his eyes. He was glad that my Will was out of the way for three years.

CHAPTER V.

FEMINA FURENS.

FOR two days I sat at home, or walked about the Holmbush Fields, brooding. The *Dancing Polly* was gone, she was the prize of the revenue people. They had not taken my little boat; I might, as of old, put out to sea and dream, no longer of the future, but of the golden past, on the gentle bosom of the Channel. And, of course, there was the *Chace Mary*, which was no good to me. For two days I thought of nothing but the sentence. Three years at sea; three years on board a man-o'-war; three years among the rough sea-dogs who manned our ships; three years in a hard and severe service; where they flogged the men for next to nothing; where the pursers cheated and starved the crew; where the food was the coarsest; where the rivalry after every action was, who could show the biggest "butcher's bill;" where there was but one saving clause—that the men fought to win. I knew, from the talk I had heard, what manner of thing this service was: I knew how hard and rough it was; I feared nothing for Dan and the two boys, for obvious reasons—but Will was a gentleman.

And then, he might get killed in an engagement. Fights were always happening; there was no day but some new

despatch was published, showing how his Majesty's ship *Hero* had fought the French ship *Gasconade*, and brought her home in tow, disabled, and a prisoner. Yet the French went on building ships for us to take them. That is to me the most wonderful part of the whole history, that the French went on fighting a hopeless game and turned out fleet after fleet of ships better built than our own—although, Dan used to say, too heavily laden with upper gear—for us to take and destroy.

In one of these engagements, my Will, Dan, the boys, might meet their end.

Well, there was hardly a woman in England at that time who was not placed like myself; hardly one who had not son, brother, husband, or lover, fighting somewhere his Majesty's battles, afloat or ashore. A cruel and anxious time; a time when poor ignorant girls like myself went about with tightened lips, hard eyes, and clenched hands, trying vainly to be hopeful; when cultivated ladies hid their pain and smiled with agony at their hearts; when all of us, ignorant and cultivated alike, found at last our only hope and refuge—upon our knees. Oh the yearning prayers, the tearful supplications to the throne of mercy, the torture of mind, which led at last to a trust in the Divine Protector—when all the time, perhaps, the brave young fellow for whom our tears were shed and our prayers were offered, was lying fathoms deep on the shells of ocean, or covered somewhere in a foreign land with a few inches of earth, his campaigns over for ever!

Forty-eight hours' struggle through the depths of despair brought me to the goal of resignation which all women, after such mental conflicts, reach. Then I began to look about for some way of passing the time.

Isaac Agus and his wife would carry on the farm; the produce of the farm—it was not much—would suffice to keep him, his wife, and myself. That I soon argued out, and represented to the old labourer, who was hard of comprehension, but managed to understand at length that he was to be sole responsible manager for three years.

This settled, I began to think about the very remarkable and rapid clearance of the cargo.

Of course, it must have been Joshua whose step I heard in the bay; it must have been Joshua come down to lend a hand; it must have been Joshua who cleared the hold; no one else could have done it.

Where had he put the cargo?

The arrest took place at about four in the morning; when the revenue men came back to look for their prize it must have been past eight. Four hours to move fifty or sixty kegs of brandy, each holding four gallons or so.

For one man, single-handed, that is a heavy job. It would not be possible to carry the kegs very far.

Now, we had half-a-dozen places, known only to ourselves, in which we could stow our merchandise. They were scattered about in the Undercliff. Some were a good half-mile from the bay, one or two were quite close. Joshua, I thought, would take the nearest of all. This was a place lying quite close to the path from the bay to the farm; to reach it you scrambled over a sloping ledge of loose stones, and you passed by what seemed to be a tangled heap of brambles. If you got to the back of the bushes you saw that they covered over a natural hollow, a sort of punch-bowl, which made the most admirable cellar in the world, especially in summer, when the leaves were thick.

I went straight to the spot, and pulled aside the branches. Below me, to my great joy, I discovered the whole of the *Dancing Polly's* last run.

Joshua had put it there—careful Joshua! He had not ventured yet to sell any of it—prudent Joshua! No doubt he would account to Dan on his return for his share of the money—righteous Joshua!

Anyhow, whether Joshua did this thing with a view to his own interest only, or not, it was pluckily done, and well done.

Woman-like, having found a secret, I rejoiced. Who could have laid the information? No one but ourselves—of whom Joshua was one—knew. Now, much as I dreaded

the man for his violence and masterfulness, I never for one moment suspected Joshua of this villany. The loathing, the hatred, the contempt with which men of all classes in those days regarded an informer were such, that a mother would have preferred to see her son lying in his grave, than to hear that he had become such a creature.

I have heard that a poet has said that an angry woman will dare anything. I think I have learned from my own experience, that a man from whom has been taken the girl he loves will do and dare anything to win her back.

The day after I made this discovery, there came to Rousdon Bay the young fellow belonging to Lieutenant Pollard's company, of whom I have already spoken, John Beer.

He was a good-natured lad, and had never ceased to regret the part he played in the case. He found me sitting in the porch looking sadly out to sea, and he sat down, kindly saying nothing for awhile. That was good of him.

"What is it you want with me, John Beer?"

"Nothing," he said.

Then there was no need for me to say anything, so I went on with my meditations, which were gloomy enough.

"The captain did say," he presently went on, "he did say that I might come over here, and find out something about the cargo, if I could; and he did say, too, that he hoped you wouldn't fret and grizzle, because, there's more comes back than you'd think, and it is only for three years. Lord! what's three years to a chap? Next door to nothing—and good fun all the time knocking over they Frenchmen like ninepins."

I made no reply.

"About the cargo, Pleasance. It's a sad loss to us is that brandy."

"Yes," I said; "I am very glad you haven't got it."

"Of course you know where it is," he went on, with a meaning smile. "Everybody knows that you were in all the secrets. The captain he says that if you weren't the prettiest girl in all Dorsetshire, he'd have put you in the dock alongside of the rest."

"If I did know where it is," I said, "I should not tell you. Look for it and find it, if you can."

"Who could have taken it? There was only one man who knew about the run—him as gave the information; because I heard him tell the captain so. But even he would not have dared, after giving that information."

"Who was it gave the information?" I sprang to my feet all trembling with excitement. "Who was it told you?"

"That," said the man, "is a secret."

"Tell me, John Beer, tell me. Oh, if I only knew!"

"I wonder what you would give to know, Pleasance?"

"How can I tell?"

"It was a mean and sneaking thing to do," said the man. "I heard it accidentally. I was sentry on duty. The captain's window was open and I listened. The captain and him, they think no one knows. I was in the front of the house, where the flagstaff is; he come in from the back, so as no one should see. But the window was open, and I both heard and seen him."

"Tell me, John Beer, tell me! Oh, what can I give to make you tell me?"

He reflected, with a straw in his mouth.

"There was fifty kegs, if there was one," he murmured. "Take away the captain's share, it is a matter of three guineas ahead. If I had a couple of them kegs——"

"You shall, John, you shall; I'll give them to you at once."

"And yet it's a risk. Suppose the captain was to find out."

"How can he find out?"

"Why, girls talk wild. You'd be in a tair—able rage, you would, Pleasance, if you only knew. It's the meanest, sneakingest thing ever done. That's what it is."

"If you will only tell me, I will never let out to a single creature how I got to know. Tell me!"

"Why then, if it's all right about them two kegs, and you won't never let out who told you—and considering what a mean and sneaking thing it was to do—why, I don't mind telling you. It was no—other—than—Joshua—Meech himself!"

I stared at him, incredulous. The thing was impossible.

"I tell you," repeated John Beer, "I seen him. It was the evening before, and at nine o'clock."

Nine o'clock! Then he must have gone straight away to give the information, after telling me that, whatever happened, I was to blame.

"The window was open. The captain was reading by the light of a pair of candles. I heard steps at the back of the house, crunching the gravel. Then I heard a knock at the captain's door. I looked in at the window, being so placed in the dark that I could do that without being seen. And I saw Joshua Meech himself open the door and walk in. Then I knew that there was mischief brewing."

"Pleasance!" he went on, after a pause, during which he gasped with indignation. "I knew that there was villany. And I wish I'd have put my carbine at that open window and let him have the charge in his face, the scoundrel.

"'Captain Pollard,' he says, looking more like a devil than a human man, let alone Dan Gulliver's nephew, 'I've come to lay information.'

"'Why!' cries the captain. 'Information from you, Joshua Meech? Dick Turpin will be laying information next. Or perhaps Dan Gulliver.'

"'I've come to lay information, sir, against Dan Gulliver.'

"'You? Against Dan Gulliver? What is the meaning of this? Why, man, you are his partner! You are his nephew!'

"'I've come to lay information against Dan Gulliver,' repeated Joshua, with a white face. I was listening all the while, you may be sure.

"'What does it mean? Have you quarrelled?'

"'That does not matter to you,' he replied doggedly. 'I'm come with that information. Will you take it, or will you refuse it? If you do, I must go to the mayor and lay it before him.'

"'Joshua Meech,' said the captain, 'you are a villain. You are a black, foul villain. Whether this is treachery or revenge, you are a double-distilled scoundrel.'

"Joshua Meech made no reply.

"'I must take your information,' the captain went on. 'It is my duty to take it and act upon it. Most informers are poor starving devils, whose necessities make them enact the part of spy. You have not that excuse. You are bringing ruin upon your old uncle, the man by whom you have been befriended and enriched. It is revenge, I suppose, for some petty quarrel. But such devilish revenge I never heard of before. Go on with your tale, blackguard and villain!'

"Ah, Pleasance, you all thought, at the trial, that the captain gloried in what he done. Don't you believe that no more. Only he had to do it, you know. It was his duty.

"Then Joshua Meech told how the run over was to be that very night, how the *Dancing Polly* was already gone, and how she would return the next night.

"The captain took it all down.

"'Is that all?' he asked.

"'That is all,' said Joshua.

"'Then go. Do not breathe the air of this room with me. Great heavens!' he cried, starting to his feet, 'that such a villain should live in this kingdom of England, and call himself my fellow-countryman! Go!'

"There, Pleasance; now you know all."

Yes; this was his revenge. This was his plan to prevent me from marrying Will. To make this impossible, or to defer it, he had the incredible baseness to sacrifice his uncle and his cousins. Was it possible, could any one have believed, that a man should be so wicked?

I sat all that day, meditating revenge, thinking in what way I could most injure this man. One wild plan after another suggested itself to me. I would set fire to his mill. I would secretly destroy the trees in his orchard. I would put a stone in the wheels of his mill. I would go into the town and tell everybody.

Nothing, however, satisfied me. Revenge never does satisfy. If his mill was burned he would build it up again; but that would not give me back Dan, and the boys, and Will, and the *Dancing Polly*. He could repair

any mischief I could do him. Even if I whispered it round in Lyme Regis that he was the informer, he would deny it, and I had no proof, because John Beer was bound to silence. What then could I do?

In the evening, still brooding over the revenge I was to take, I grew restless and walked over the fields to the mill itself.

It was a bright night; the valleys which stretch away behind Lyme lay all bathed in a beautiful moonlight, everything was peaceful and quiet, except the heart of the girl who went along the lonely way. She met no one, she saw nothing, her soul was full of an inextinguishable craving for vengeance; she was like a tigress bereft of her cubs

The mill stood alone in its field, silent, and backed by the black depths of its shadows and the woods. The top of the big wheel could be made out standing clear against the sky. Beneath it poured the waters of the leat, which in the daytime worked the wheel.

I stole like a shadow through the orchard; on the other side, away from the mill, was a linney, or penthouse, where Joshua's waggon was kept. I sat down on the broad wheel of the waggon, trying to put my disordered thoughts into some sort of shape. I hungered for revenge—I longed to make him suffer. I had come here to feel near to the man on whom I was going to work revenge.

He was on the other side of the wall, I thought. He was chuckling, no doubt, over the end of my love story, laughing to think that my lover was serving before the mast on one of his Majesty's ships, for three long years. O villain!

Presently, as I listened, I heard voices. Some one was with him then. I crept from the penthouse, and stepped lightly over the narrow flower-bed which stood beneath the window. The shutter was closed, but one knew what sort of a shutter would be that of Joshua's cottage at the mill. In fact it was not even barred, and there was a hole in it, through which I saw what was going on. The visitor was our old friend Mr. Mallock, justice of the peace, and he was talking in his magisterial way.

"Quite a providence, Joshua"—he wagged his head till his purple cheeks shook and wabbled—"that you were able to rescue the cargo. Quite a providence. At one time I thought I should be able to dismiss the charge, but it was impossible. Poor old Dan! Poor boys! Who was the villain that informed?"

"I wish we knew, sir."

"I wish we did, with all my heart. He would get a warm reception at Lyme, I promise him so much. However—three years—it is a long time. You may send me, Joshua, at the old price—ah!—twenty kegs—yes, I think I had better secure what I can get. Twenty kegs. Dear me! They can come to-morrow morning in flour sacks. I will pay for them now."

There was a great counting out of money on the table. When Joshua was satisfied that it was all right, he put it up in a little bag, and promised to bring the brandy next morning.

Then the worthy justice of the peace retired. I slipped back to my place of concealment, while Joshua accompanied his visitor to the door with many expressions of gratitude for his custom and his condolences.

"You are very welcome, Joshua, very welcome," said his worship; "and as for that villain——"

He disappeared in the darkness, still muttering what he would do, had he the power, to the scoundrel who spoiled an honest man's trade.

Joshua went back, and I heard him bar the door, so that I knew he would have no other visitors.

Then I returned to my place and watched him again through the hole of the shutter.

He was rather pale, and his hand was shaking. No doubt he was thinking of his villany.

He went to the cupboard in the wall, and drew out a bottle, containing, I knew well, some of poor Dan Gulliver's best. I wished I could dash the bottle in his face as he drank from a wineglass.

The brandy gave him courage, I suppose, for he looked

round him with a more assured air. What he was saying to himself, I believe, was that nobody knew, except Captain Pollard, and he certainly could not tell. Nobody knew! Why, within a short six feet of where he stood was the girl he had so foully wronged, burning to be avenged.

He tied the bag of money which Mr. Mallock had left with him, tightly, and taking a short thick poker which stood beside the andirons, he prised up the hearthstone. There he deposited the bag, and replaced the stone carefully, taking the precaution to sweep ashes over the edges, so as to conceal the fact of its recent removal. We all used the hearthstone for our bank, and we all went through the same formality of trying to hide the fact.

This done, he looked around him again, sighed, and seized the stone bottle which held the brandy. One, two, three glasses in succession of raw spirit. Was this his nightly custom, or was he seeking to drown remorse? Then he took the candle, opened the door which stood at the bottom of the stairs, and stumbled up to his bedroom. It seemed to me that Joshua was likely to sleep heavily, after all that brandy.

I waited below, motionless, until the light was extinguished. Then I began cautiously to see if I could open the window. The shutter was not secured, as I said before. The window was upon hinges, and opened inwards. It was a heavy window, consisting of small square panes of thick glass, set in lead. I lifted the latch which fastened it, by means of a small twig. The window fell open, I waited for a moment to see if Joshua was roused, and then I climbed into the room.

What I was going to do was simply to rob Joshua. That was part of my revenge. Not to get any advantage out of the money for myself at all, but just to deprive him of it.

It was nothing to me being without a light in the room. I knew exactly where everything was. I first bolted the door of the staircase. That would secure me plenty of time for escape, should Joshua be roused. Then I took the poker and prised up the hearthstone cautiously. Feeling in the dark, I discovered one, two, three—eight bags, all tied up,

and all containing money. Now I was quite certain when I laid my hands upon those bags, that I was not only going to take some of Joshua's money, but all of it. He kept his whole store, all his savings, in that hiding-place. I ought, at this length of time, to feel ashamed at the baseness of my revenge; but I cannot. I suppose I ought to repent of what I did—but I cannot. The wrong was so bitter, the villany was so unutterable, that I have only to think of my own feelings that night, and I justify myself at once. It was delightful to me to feel that I was taking the whole of his money. I hoped that its loss would ruin him. When the bags were all out, I carefully put back the hearthstone.

Eight bags. There were no more. I laid them all together on the table, felt in the drawer for the ball of string which the practical mind of Joshua made him always keep there, and tied them all together, and attached about three yards of string by which to hang them in their place.

There must have been a good sum of money in the whole, because the bags were pretty heavy to carry. I dropped them cautiously out of the window, crept outside myself, and carried away the bags.

The great undershot wheel of the mill occupied, as we know already, one end of the building which formed both mill and cottage. It stood there, under a broad sloping penthouse of heavy thatch, which made it dark in the brightest day. Once, long before, when the wheel was stopped for some repairs, I held it in its place by a wooden spoke, and amused myself by climbing to the top under this projecting roof. It was a girl's trick, and rather a dangerous one. I got no good, not even the nest which I expected to find; but I saw, hidden away in the darkness, a great hook, stuck in the wall. What it was originally placed there for I do not know, but it was so high up, so hidden by the wheel and the black shadows of the roof, that it was quite invisible from below. That was the place for my bags. First, I succeeded, by tying a spoke of the wheel to one of the beams in the woodwork, in keeping the wheel, over which the water was no longer running, motionless,

while I climbed up. Then I mounted the wheel, which was now like a ladder, and clambered up three or four of the undershot buckets, till I could reach the wall close under the roof. Here I felt about in the darkness till I found the hook, and then, tying the end of the string securely to it, I lowered the bags slowly into the black water beneath. I heard above the noise of the falling water the splash of the bags, I felt them touch the bottom, and then, with a great gladness in my heart, thinking of Joshua's rage when he should find out his loss, I cautiously descended from the perilous perch, untied the spoke, and considered what to do next.

The first temptation—a childish one—was to hurl stones at his bedroom window, so as to awaken him and bring him down; but I abandoned that idea, as another and a more brilliant one occurred to me.

Joshua had sold twenty kegs out of the cargo to Mr. Mallock, the justice of the peace. No doubt he had arranged, or was arranging, for the sale of all the rest. No doubt, too, he intended adding the proceeds of this transaction to the pile—aha! the pile beneath the hearthstone.

I set off to run almost the whole of the way back to Rousdon, under the impulse of this new idea, which filled my mind. It was about eleven o'clock, as I should judge. It took me nearly an hour before I got to Rousdon Farm. I had business to do, and there would be no thought of bed for me that night. But first I went into the house, found some supper, and procured certain handy tools necessary for my purpose.

Had I time to do it? It had taken nearly four hours to remove the cargo of the *Dancing Polly* from the boat to the hiding-place. Could I do what I proposed in six?

I would try.

There certainly was no stronger girl than myself along the whole shore. The life I had led in the open air; the rowing, sailing, and fishing; the gardening, the rambles and climbs among the crags of the Holmbush Fields and Pinhay Point; the sea-bathing, the generous but simple diet; all

these, added to a physique to which Dame Nature had been generous, made me active and muscular above the average even of young women living like myself. Yet it was a heavy task which I proposed to effect.

It was nothing less than to carry every single keg down to the seashore, turn out the contents, fill them with sea-water, and carry them back again. But the thought of Joshua's consternation when he should discover it gave me courage.

When I had got all but six or seven down the cliff another thought struck me. There were the two kegs for my informant, John Beer. It would not be fair to give him sea-water, after the service he had done me. There was also the poor old rector. What would he do without his brandy? and, unless I provided for him, he would get none till Dan and the boys came home again. So I removed the last six, and carried them away to a place where I was pretty certain Joshua would not think of looking for them. And then I proceeded to the next part of my task.

The kegs were now all in a row upon the beach, lying on their sides. I went from one to the other, and with my hammer and chisel forced out the bung from every one. In a few minutes the smooth water of the little bay was salt-water brandy-grog, rather weak, and the kegs were empty.

To fill them again quickly was more difficult. I had to take off shoes and stockings, tuck up skirts, and wade in the water, carrying each keg separately. It was now growing late. I must have been at work five hours, and yet the kegs had all to be carried back.

Well, it was done at length. The day was breaking as the last keg was laid in its place, and the brambles pulled together to hide them. The tide had come up in the bay, and washed away all traces of the brandy which had been spilt so freely on the stones. I sat down, and tried to think soberly what I had done.

A villain was punished; the meanest, most treacherous, most cold-blooded scoundrelism ever perpetrated had received some sort of fit reward. In a few days, perhaps in a few

hours, the traitor would find his hearthstone prised up, and his treasure gone. A few hours more and he would discover that his prize from Dan's unlucky run was not worth the kegs which contained it.

And yet I was unsatisfied. All this would not give me back my lover, nor bring home Dan and the boys, nor undo the misery of the past three weeks. I thirsted for more revenge.

When I rose to go home the splendid sun was rising over the waters of the Channel, and the morning was clear and bright. Far off on the horizon I saw the sails of a great fleet. It must be Nelson's fleet. Among the ships, somewhere, were those I loved, going away to sea, to face battle, sudden death, shipwreck, plague, and pestilence, all by the act of one man.

I lay at home all that morning asleep. At twelve o'clock Mrs. Agus, surprised at my long sleep, awakened me, and brought me some dinner.

Then I began to think again.

In the afternoon arrived my exciseman.

"Have you done anything to Joshua Meech, Pleasance?" he asked, in a breathless way, so that I knew he must have heard something.

"Done anything?"

"Ay. Joshua's been robbed. He's been robbed of all his money. He's been tearing round town all day. Ho! Ho! I hope the information money was with it too. Who could have robbed him?"

"Who could?" I echoed.

"It must have been some one who had a spite against him. Who but you had a spite? O Pleasance, Pleasance! it's a hanging matter."

"Don't talk wild," I replied. "If Joshua is robbed, so much the better. I am glad of it."

John Beer shook his head. He was only half satisfied.

"To be sure," he said, "I've seen gipsies about. You know best. Well, and how about the kegs, Pleasance?"

"I will give you the kegs at once, if you will do me another favour. Nay, it is not to tell me more about Joshua; I know

quite enough. It is only to carry some brandy to Parson Burden's."

"Why, I'll do that," he said briskly, "and more, for your sake."

He took the wheelbarrow, and very soon was trundling my present, which I had resolved to say was Dan's, to the good old rector.

On the way he mentioned casually that a pressgang was in the neighbourhood. "They don't know it, the boys at Lyme, else they'd keep at home for a day or two. There'll be a good few sailors more aboard his Majesty's ships when that gang has done its business."

I thought nothing at the time.

But later on I started, remembering that Joshua had promised to deliver twenty kegs that morning, and that at daybreak he would be at the hiding-place. Another thought had struck me.

I had no doubt, knowing the nature of the business, and the haste made after a run to get the cargo safely stowed away and disposed of, that Joshua intended to take it all in two loads, probably one that morning and one the next. This knowledge put a fatal power into my hands. I turned the thought over in my mind till it became a resolution, clear and determined. Since Joshua had sent Dan and all of them away to sea, he should go too.

Of course, they could not take a miller from his mill—no. But suppose Joshua was caught, in boatman's rig, handling his kegs in Rousdon Bay!

When John Beer had taken the rector his brandy, and carried off his own to some secure place which he knew of, probably to a friend in the town, a burning desire came over me to see Joshua Meech face to face, and to triumph over his misfortunes. Tired as I was with my long night's work, I hastened to put on my hat and set off once more for my three-mile walk across the fields.

I knew how mean and parsimonious he was, how he had pinched and saved, denying himself luxuries and living hardly, in order to feel richer every day. I was quite certain that his

chief pleasure was to open his hiding-place secretly and count his treasures. I rejoiced to think how, in these moments, there was mixed up a feeling that he was saving up for me, and how that memory would be an additional stab for him. For me? Was it possible, even without his superhuman wickedness, for me to look upon another man after my glorious Will?

So he had already found out his loss. That was strange. Did he then look in the morning to see if it was safe? But perhaps the open window and the hanging shutter awakened his suspicions. I should soon know. As I drew near the mill, and looked down upon it from the top of the steep lane leading from the high road, I could not help feeling the contrast between the beauty of the place and the angry passions of its master and the girl who was going to visit him. But I had to hide my indignation. I composed my features as well as I could, and crossed his orchard.

Joshua was sitting on the bench outside the mill. The wheel was slowly going round and round, with its monotonous sound, and the mill was at work. But its master sat motionless, his head on his hands. He was trying to think who could have robbed him.

"Joshua!" I cried; "Joshua! What is the matter? Are you asleep?"

"I wish I was," he replied hoarsely. "I think I shall never be able to sleep again. What do you want, Pleasance?"

"I came to tell you, Joshua, that I saw the fleet pass along the horizon this morning. It must be Nelson's. Dan and the rest must be aboard one of the ships."

"Ay, ay; no doubt. Well, they—they—they will get through it, I daresay."

"O Joshua! what a villain must he be who informed against them! What could we do to that villain to punish him properly? Tell me, Joshua."

"Do—do? What could we do? Put him in the duck-pond, I suppose," he replied wearily.

"That would not be half enough, Joshua. I should like to take away all his money"—he started—"and to tell all the

world, and send him away for ever with the curses of the people."

"Ay," he said, "never mind the informer, Pleasance; listen to me. I've been robbed."

"You, Joshua? You robbed?"

"I've been robbed of every farthing I had. All in gold —all tied up in bags—all the money I've been saving for years."

"All the money you saved to marry me with?"

"It is all gone."

"Then you can't marry me, which will be removing a temptation, Joshua. But who could have done it?"

"I don't know. I can't think. Go away, Pleasance, and let me think by myself."

"Is there any one who is at enmity with you, Joshua?"

He shook his head.

"Any one whom you have wronged, Joshua?"

A flush crossed his face. "Go, child. You can do nothing, leave me alone."

"Joshua," I said, retreating, "you are a Methody. Remember what you said to me, 'Patience, and kiss the rod.'"

I found next morning, on investigating the hiding-place, that twenty kegs of the salt-water had been taken out, no doubt at daybreak. I rowed to Lyme, sought out John Beer, and revealed my new plot. He at once fell in with it. The pressgang was in hiding somewhere at Up Lyme. Four of them would be enough to effect the capture. He would tell them where to go, and what they were to expect—a determined man, who would fight for his liberty, but a good sailor.

They were to lie concealed among the rocks, just under the hiding-place of the cargo. They were to wait until they heard their victim climbing down the zig-zag road, and then they were to effect their seizure. Above all, they were to take care not to let him be seen in Lyme, Up Lyme, Bridport, or any of the places round, where he might be known.

Now this seemed to me a really splendid piece of revenge. The other things were very well in their way, but incomplete.

Joshua was, no doubt, mad with rage at being robbed of his money, but he would recover in time. Also, he would be enraged beyond expression at losing his brandy. Still he would recover from that blow. But how would he recover from the blow of being pressed and sent to sea?

All that night I did not sleep. I heard towards daybreak the footsteps of the pressgang as they crept down the road to the bay. And then I went out in the dark to see for myself what would happen.

About four o'clock I heard the noise of Joshua's waggon-wheels, and then I—I was sitting among the rocks, wondering when the last act of my revenge would be completed—I saw his figure in the moonlight, as he strode down the rough way, with the certain tread of one who knew the path, and had trodden it hundreds of times.

He went straight to the place where his treasure lay, and roughly pulling away the brambles, he began to take out the kegs. Apparently, from his composure, he had not yet learned from the worthy justice the nature of the new misfortune.

As he began the work, I heard other footsteps. They were those of the four sailors. I saw them, but he did not—being intent upon the job—come cautiously out of the shade of the rock. There was not much to climb—about twenty feet—and they took it, having Joshua well in sight, with a rush and a shout.

Joshua sprang to his feet and turned upon his assailants. They carried cutlasses, but these were not drawn, and each had a stout short cudgel in his hand. Joshua fought like a madman. One after the other he hurled his assailants from him. He was a splendidly strong man. But the others came like bulldogs, they had now caught hold, and they would not let go. When it was all over, he stood with bleeding face and head, and arms pinioned close to his sides. He could make no more resistance.

"Now, mate," said one of the men, "you come quiet, or we'll make you that quiet as you'll never want to sing no more."

All the rest growled acquiescence. They had had enough of fighting for that bout.

"But what's all this?" The leader pointed to the kegs, three or four of which Joshua had already brought out and laid upon the grass.

"Brandy," said Joshua.

The men looked at one another.

"A gimlet," said the pinioned Joshua, "is in my pocket."

One of them drew out the gimlet, and bored a hole. Joshua shook his head cheerfully. No doubt they would all get drunk, and he would escape.

"Never a pannikin, be there, mate?" the man asked his prisoner.

Joshua shook his head.

Then I laughed to myself. For the man who bored the hole lifted the keg, and poured what he thought was brandy into his open mouth.

"Faugh—waugh—pr—rt!"

"What's the matter?"

"It isn't brandy at all. Faugh—waugh! It's sea water."

"It is brandy," said Joshua.

"Drink it yourself, then."

He lifted the keg. Joshua drank.

He too behaved in the same surprising manner.

"It was brandy three weeks ago," said Joshua, despairing.

Then he sat down, saying no more, while the men tried the other kegs with the same result. They all contained sea-water.

"Got any more, mate?" asked one of them, looking round.

"There's a dozen more, behind that blackberry bush," said Joshua, with the calmness of complete despair.

They searched; they lugged them all out; they bored the gimlet into every one. Not one single drop of brandy in any.

"This here," said one, "is a most amazing go. What was you a-going to do with they kegs, mate?"

"Sell them," said Joshua.

"Was you a-going to sell them for brandy, or was you a-going to sell them for bilge-water?"

"They were full of brandy three weeks ago," repeated Joshua. "That is all I know."

They looked at each other in amazement. Then the leader gave the word, as if nothing unusual had happened—

"Fall in, men. March!"

Just then I stepped from my hiding-place—the daylight was pretty clear then—and ran up over the rocks so as to meet them higher up on the road. That looked as if I might have been awakened by the noise of the fight, and came out to see what it was.

"Pleasance!" cried Joshua. "This is lucky. Tell these men—it is a pressgang—they have pressed me—me—a simple miller, and not a sailor at all—tell them they have no right——"

"O Joshua—Joshua," I said, "this is very sad! Won't you let him go, gentlemen? This is a dreadful misfortune. And all the brandy spilled? Dear me! Oh do let him go! He is not a regular sailor, indeed, gentlemen, indeed he is not. Though he is so handy aboard that he will surprise you. Do let him go—do! He knows every inch of the French coast, but you must not press him. He is the best boatman from Lyme to Weymouth, though he is a miller. Oh, he is much too good a sailor to be pressed. Do let him go!"

"Let him go!" cried the boatswain, with an oath. "If I let him go, I wish I may be smothered in a French prison."

"O Joshua, Joshua!" I cried, as they dragged him away, pinioned and powerless. "Dispensations! Grievous dispensations! Let us kiss the rod!"

CHAPTER VI.

LADY CAMPION.

I OUGHT to have been the happiest girl in the whole world because I had craved for full revenge and had obtained it. Nobody could have been punished more effectively than Joshua. I had deprived him of everything: of his money,

which he loved; of his reputation, of which he was proud, because no one, most certainly, would ever trust him again in the matter of brandy which had not paid the duty; and of his personal liberty, because they were quite certain, once they had him on board, not to let so smart a sailor go.

Yet revenge does not satisfy. And it cannot atone. No amount of suffering and sorrow restores the shattered past; you cannot bring a murdered happiness into life by hanging the murderer. All this I did not understand, and sat alone in my cottage, or wandered alone on the Undercliff, seeking satisfaction in the memory of my revenge, and finding none.

Three weeks or a month passed so. Had I lived much longer in this loneliness—for I spoke to no one, not even to the faithful old woman who took care I did not starve—I think I should have gone mad with much brooding. But there came an end.

It was on a sunny forenoon in November, I was thinking how it must be out at sea for Dan and the boys, and wondering whether Will thought of me as much as I thought of him, and trying to bring back to my mind his handsome face and laughing eyes, when I saw a most unaccustomed sight. There came along the lane, riding slowly, because the road was rough, a gentleman dressed in an immense cloak with a fur collar, buckled at the neck. He was a middle-aged man, perhaps turned fifty, and of grave aspect. Behind him rode two servants, each of whom carried at the back of his saddle a small leathern trunk.

The gentleman looked about him curiously. The place, left now to the charge of the two old people, was already beginning to show signs of neglect. I sat in the porch half-hidden by the great fuchsia-tree. He seemed to be looking for some one to speak to. The servants rode up to him, and they all then consulted.

"There is no other house but this in the place. It must be Gulliver's Farm."

I emerged from the porch, and went to ask of whom the gentleman was in search. He took off his hat politely.

"You are Miss Pleasance Noel?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I am Pleasance."

It was so seldom that I heard my surname, that I had almost forgotten its existence.

"You are the young lady of whom I am in search. You are a—a friend, I believe, of Mr. William Campion, son of the late Sir Godfrey Campion."

"He is my sweetheart," I replied.

Then the gentleman smiled, dismounted, and gave the reins to one of the servants.

"I am John Huntspill," he said. "I have the honour to be a partner in that firm; I am travelling for the house in the southern counties. I am also, I may boast, in the confidence of Mr. William. May I, therefore, beg the honour of a private interview with you?"

This was very imposing. I led the way into the house and begged him to be seated; at the same time I offered him a glass of brandy, assuring him, in the words of Dan Gulliver, that it was right good brandy which had never paid duty. In my girlish ignorance, I conceived that the payment of duty inflicted some grievous damage to the character of brandy; also I thought that everybody in polite society offered everybody else glasses of raw spirit.

"Thank you," Mr. Huntspill replied, with stately courtesy. "The partners in the house of Campion & Co. never drink any spirits, on principle, except their own rum, and that is duty paid."

He meant the last fact as an admonition—I took it as a confession that the rum was of inferior quality.

"I have received," he went on, "two letters, part of which I propose to communicate to you. In fact, young lady, they immediately concern you. The first is from Mr. William."

He opened a great leathern pocketbook and produced two letters.

"I received this," he said, "ten days ago, being then in the village of Brighthelmstone, and immediately resolved upon travelling hither to acquaint you with the wishes of Mr. William.

"He informs me, first, of the lamentable chain of events

which have led the young gentleman into this melancholy position. Had we known of it in time, such is the influence of the house, and so signal were the services of the late Sir Godfrey (of pious memory), that we might and certainly should have procured the immediate release of Mr. William, and probably the pardon of the others. But his pride would not allow him to communicate the news to us. The letter is written on the road to Portsmouth, whence he is to be drafted—great heavens! the son of Sir Godfrey a sailor before the mast!—on board one of the ships in his Majesty's fleet. He says then—

"'Before this unlucky accident, it was my singular good fortune to engage the affections of a young person in whose soul, I believe, virtue and goodness alone reign.'" Mr. Huntspill read this passage very impressively, repeating the last words—"virtue and goodness alone reign." He bowed, and I blushed, not with satisfaction at hearing these gracious words, but in humiliation, thinking how little I deserved them, and how I had wreaked a revenge in which virtue played so poor a part.

Mr. Huntspill went on: "'The worth of her heart is illustrated and made apparent to the world by the extraordinary beauty of her face and person.'"—O Will, Will!—"'She has promised to make me happy by becoming my wife. The promise remains to be fulfilled on my return, should a benignant Providence grant my return to my native shores. I have told you, my generous friend, the whole of my story. You will, I am sure, continue to behave to me with the same——' that is not part of the business," said Mr. Huntspill, interrupting at this point. "He goes on presently: 'I have written to my mother—who must on no account discover the degrading situation in which I have been placed—stating, which is perfectly true, that I am going to sea for a long voyage, in which I may visit many lands, and that I hope to pay my dutiful respects to her on my return. I have also informed her of my proposed marriage with Pleasance Noel, and begged her, as a mark of her forgiveness and continued love, to receive my betrothed in her own house, and,

during my absence, to have her instructed in the practice of those external accomplishments, which alone are wanting to make her an ornament to the polite world. Goodness, my dear friend, is at all times better than rank.'

"It is indeed," said John Huntspill, folding up the letter. "With this, which was forwarded to me from London, came a letter from Lady Campion herself, a portion of which I will also read to you."

"'It has long been my resolution,' she says, 'to attempt no further interference with my son's plans of life. His devotion to a musical instrument, especially when that instrument is the common fiddle, seems to me inconsistent with the sobriety of a London merchant; his readiness at all times to forsake the counting-house for a concert or a play, seems to me unworthy of the seriousness which should characterise a churchman; while his roving habits hold out little hope of a steady future. I have now learned that he has gone to sea, after contracting an engagement of the most serious character with a young woman, apparently of humble origin.'"

"My father was a ship's carpenter," I said, half in pride and half in explanation. Before I knew Will I had always regarded that rank as exceptionally dignified. But I was quite aware that Lady Campion would hardly be likely to think so highly of the position.

"Quite so," said John Huntspill. "A most respectable and useful vocation. Let me continue: 'In justice to her and to myself, I should wish to make her acquaintance. Will you, therefore, make it your business to see her? Communicate with her friends, and tell them that I propose to receive her in my poor house. And should she wish to remain and I to keep her with me, I undertake to bestow upon her whatever lessons and education she may yet require to befit her for the station to which Heaven hath raised her. You may bring her back with you, under your own protection.'"

"Such, Miss Pleasance," said John Huntspill, "is the proposal made to you by Lady Campion. It will be my first care to lay it before your friends."

"I have no friends," I replied. "Dan and Job and Jephthah are all at sea."

"Do you mean that you are alone, absolutely alone in this house?"

"Quite alone," I said. "Only in the cottage there are Isaac Agus and his wife. I live alone and sleep alone here. I thought I should go on living alone for some years."

"But you will not refuse Lady Campion's invitation? Consider, it is made at Mr. William's own request. She will be your mother."

"No," I said, "I cannot refuse it. But I am afraid. O Mr. Huntspill! I am a very ignorant country girl. The goodness and virtue that my Will thinks are in my heart, exist only in his own mind. He is foolish about me. I am not fit for him—so handsome and so strong."

"Nay," said John Huntspill gravely, "the chiefest profit of virtuous love, as I understand it, being myself but a bachelor, and unworthy of the married condition, is that it leads the heart imperceptibly upwards, inasmuch as we fain would posses the qualities which he—or she—who loves us doth in his fondness attribute to us. Therefore, be of good courage, and resolve that when Mr. William returns, he will find his dreams more than realised."

This wise speech, so far from encouraging me, rather daunted me for the moment. Afterwards, when I came to remember it and make out what it meant, I think it did give me courage.

"When, then, can you be ready?"

I blushed. For in truth I had nothing to travel in. My whole wardrobe only consisted of half-a-dozen frocks, including one which Will had caused to be made for me.

Mr. Huntspill read my thoughts.

"There are shops in Lyme," he said. "I will at once ride into the town and purchase for you the simple necessaries requisite for a young lady's journey to London. I leave behind, for your protection, one of my servants. For the present, Miss Pleasance, I wish you farewell."

He bowed, touched my finger with his own, and was gone.

Presently I heard him riding slowly down the lane, and I sat down to wait, wondering what new life this would be which was opening before me.

Outside, the servant whom he had left behind for my protection had dismounted, had tied up his horse, and was leaning on a gate. It seemed inhospitable not to ask him into the house, and I did so, inviting him to sit down, greatly to his surprise. He refused to sit in my presence, but was pleased to accept such a meal as I was able to offer him, with two or three glasses of the brandy which never paid duty. This part of the entertainment, indeed, afforded the honest fellow infinite gratification.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when Mr. Huntspill returned, his servant carrying a box before him, and leading a horse on which was a lady's saddle.

When in my own room I was dressed in the new clothes, I hardly knew myself. A long black habit for riding, gloves, a hat and veil, all sorts of little things of which I hardly knew the use, neatly packed in a leathern valise. I finished my preparations at length, and came downstairs—dressed like a young lady. But I could hardly have looked one, because I felt awkward and constrained in my new attire. Mr. Huntspill bowed politely.

"The most beautiful girl," he said, repeating Will's dear words, "on all the southern coast."

That was all very well. But how would beauty give me courage to face Lady Campion?

We were to start at once. But a sudden thought struck me. The hearthstone! Dan's last words were to remember the hearthstone. I had seen to what use Joshua put his, and I had every reason to believe that Dan's was, in the same manner, his own bank, the place where he confided his single talent, so that it could by no means grow or produce interest, or become useful at all, except for spending.

I reflected for a moment.

"Now, my dear young lady," said Mr. Huntspill, his eyes had been upon me ever since I came down in my new dress, and I could see that he looked at me with admiration. That

to my mind meant that Will would have been satisfied, and I was glad.

"It is the hearthstone," I said.

He stared for a moment. Then he remembered that the general use of the lower sort of people was to hide away their money, and that the hearthstone was the general hiding-place, so that if a cottage was robbed, the first thing the burglars did was to prise up the hearthstone.

We raised the stone, Mr. Huntspill and I, between us. Beneath was a perfect mine, an Eldorado of gold and precious things.

Remember that Dan Gulliver was turned sixty years of age, that he had been smuggling ever since he was ten, that he had never had an unsuccessful run, and that ever since his father's death the farm had supplied most of our frugal wants, always excepting the brandy, which never, &c.

I am afraid to say how much there was under the hearthstone. It was, I know, more than a thousand pounds, all in golden guineas, tied up in bags containing a hundred each.

Mr. Huntspill poured the contents of each bag upon the table, and counted the coin carefully. For each he made a separate memorandum. Mr. Huntspill tied up the bags again, called one of his servants, and confided them to his care. Then we started on our journey.

I said farewell to the two old people who were to be left in sole charge of Rousdon Farm. Mr. Huntspill wrote his London address, in case anything should be wanted. And then he lifted me into the saddle, and we turned the horses' heads Londonwards.

We rode through Lyme, along the rough way over the cliffs to Charmouth, and then past the yellow peak of Golden Cap, over some hills to Bridport, where we spent the first night of the journey, and where Mr. Huntspill bought me some things useful and pretty, and had my hair dressed for me by a gossiping old barber, who told me it was the most beautiful hair he ever had the honour of dressing.

I do not know how long we took to finish our journey to London. We did not—to begin with—proceed by the most

direct road, because Mr. Huntspill, who was travelling for the firm and never neglected business, stayed in one place and went to another, without considering short ways.

I should have been perfectly happy but for two things—the never-ceasing anxiety about Will, and an always-increasing fear of the terrible Lady Campion.

The road, as we drew nearer London—say from Salisbury to Reading, which was the way we took, and from Reading through Windsor and Hounslow—became more and more crowded with carts, stage-coaches, post-carriages, family-coaches, and foot-travellers. They all seemed bound to London. What was this mighty London, which swallowed everything? Cattle in immense numbers—for London; herds of oxen, flocks of sheep, droves of turkeys and geese, waggons piled with every conceivable thing—all for London. At regular intervals were the great inns, outside of which there lounged an army of grooms, butlers, helps, and post-boys; in the yard was stabling for countless horses; post-carriages, carts, and gigs stood about under the penthouses; within were rambling passages and long dark galleries; the bedrooms were hung with heavy curtains, gloomy and ghostly. Mr. Huntspill was well known everywhere. I noticed that everybody asked with particular respect after the health of Lady Campion, but no one inquired for Will.

And then the motley crowd along the road. The slouching labourer in his smockfrock, hedging and ditching, who never moved from his village, saw many a curious group which might tell him of the outer world. A recruiting-sergeant, with twenty or thirty lads full of beer and martial ardour, longing to fight the French; a wounded and maimed sailor or soldier hobbling along, begging his way from village to village; a procession of gipsies setting up their arrow marks along the cross-roads, to show their friends where to look for them, stealing, singing, drinking, laughing, and fortune-telling; men who led about a dancing-bear, with a pole and a violin; men who took from place to place the bull who spent most of his pugnacious life in being baited; men who carried with them cocks for fighting, badgers for baiting, ferrets

for ratting; the cheap jack in his cart, the travelling theatre, the travelling circus, the travelling showman, the open-air gymnast, the vendor of cheap books, the singer of ballads, and sometimes—galloping along the road, blowing a trumpet, shouting: "In the King's name—way!"—the bearer of State despatches, hastening to London. Now and then we would pass a suspicious pair of horsemen, at sight of whom Mr. Huntspill would look to the pistols in the saddle, and beckon his servants to close up.

I learned a good deal in those days of other things besides curious and interesting sights. Mr. Huntspill, who was always talking to me, taught them. For instance, in the gentlest and kindest manner possible, he instructed me in sundry points of minor morals—I mean carriage and conduct of myself. This, I knew, was done in order that I might not prejudice Lady Campion against me at the outset by some act of awkwardness or bad breeding.

"A lady," said Mr. Huntspill, who always spoke with authority, "is known by her acts and words first; but there is a connection between nobility of thought and dignity of carriage."

He had learned by this time all my deficiencies, and I knew that he was going to report upon them to Lady Campion. I was not afraid of the report which he would make of me, but I was horribly afraid of Madam, as he called her.

The day before we rode into London he talked about her.

"Lady Campion," he said, "is blind, as you doubtless know. But in a short time you will forget her blindness. She writes her own letters, and her letters are read to her by means of a confidential clerk. She hears reports about the affairs of the house, and gives her counsels—which are, in reality, her instructions. And all as well as if she had the use of her eyes. Madam," Mr. Huntspill went on, "was left sole guardian to Mr. William at the death of Sir Godfrey, her son being then fourteen years of age; with a clause appointing Mr. William as chief partner in the house at the age of five-and-twenty. He is now three-and-twenty. He demands liberty of action, until the time comes for him

to rule over us. Meantime, Madam holds the reins with firmness and prudence. What she will hope for in you is the power to attach her son to his domestic and civic duties, and make the rover a worthy successor to the great Sir Godfrey, Lord Mayor of London."

This was disquieting. How could I?

He answered my look, being at all times a sympathetic man.

"Madam will tell you how. You will modify the strictness of her injunctions by the gentleness of your own heart. Your affection for Mr. William will supply the rest."

Next day we rode over Hounslow Heath—where so many misguided men had committed the acts which led to a violent death; through Uxbridge, past Shepherd's Bush—a coppice in whose recesses there lingered at evening many a cowardly foot-pad, on the watch for some defenceless old man or woman; by the stately Holland Park, standing amid a lovely country set with trees; along the gardens of Kensington, on the north of which extended mile after mile of nursery and vegetable gardens; past the dreadful tree of Tyburn, at the corner of Hyde Park; and thence, by a network of streets and lanes, in which it seemed impossible to find our way, into the city of London.

I was silent with amazement at so much noise, such crowds, and such splendid buildings. I forgot Lady Campion, everything, in wonder and delight. I rode beside Mr. Huntspill in a dream.

He watched me, riding close at my side and guiding my horse. Presently we turned into a long winding lane with no carts or waggons, but a continuous stream of people. Many of them knew Mr. Huntspill, and took off their hats to him. He gravely returned the salute. The lane led to a small quiet square, in which were only private houses. One of these, the largest, occupied the whole side of the square.

"This," said Mr. Huntspill, "is Great St. Simon Apostle, and this is Lady Campion's town house."

I dismounted in considerable trepidation. Mr. Huntspill led me by the hand into the house and up the stairs. He stopped at a door on the first landing and knocked. Then

he opened the door gently, and led me into the presence of Lady Campion.

"Those," said a firm clear voice, "are the footsteps of John Huntspill; I welcome you, my friend. Is all well?"

"All is well, madam," said John Huntspill. "The interests of the house are prospering. I present to you, madam, the young lady of whom you wrote to me, Pleasance Noel, and commend her to your ladyship's protection."

"Come here, my dear. Closer—closer yet."

I had not dared to raise my eyes. Now I did so. I saw a splendid lady, apparently about fifty years of age, magnificently dressed in black velvet. Round her neck was hung a heavy gold chain. Her collar and wristbands were of costly lace. She was sitting when we came in, and she turned her head in the slow cautious way peculiar to blind people. Yet there was little look of blindness in her eyes, and she seemed to see me as my eyes met those large proud orbs of hers. She rose, however, to give me greeting, and continued gazing at me, as it seemed, reading my features in imagination. Then she placed her hands on my shoulders and began, in a way which made me tremble, gently to pass her fingers over my face and head.

"You are pretty, child, and you are tall. What is your age?"

"I am past sixteen."

"What colour is your hair?"

"It is light brown. My eyes are blue."

All this time her busy sensitive fingers were passing lightly over my face.

"Your name is Pleasance. Your father, John Huntspill tells me, was a ship's carpenter. Your guardian, one Daniel Gulliver, has gone to sea, and you were left alone. My son William has fallen in love with you. You are betrothed to each other without the formality of asking my consent. It was wrong in my son. I trust, my dear, that what I see of you will induce me to grant that consent. We have time before us, during which we may do the best to learn each other's ways and character. Be sure that in all you do, I

shall be always watching you, blind as I am. You may kiss me, Pleasance."

I kissed her fingers, but she drew me to herself and kissed my forehead. Presently, to my distress, John Huntspill went away, and I was left alone with Madam.

She began by asking me how I used to spend my days, what I used to read, of what character were my religious opportunities, and other questions designed to bring out exactly what I knew and how I thought. Then she told me that John Huntspill had prepared a report of my general ignorance, for which care would be immediately taken. She informed me further, that a skilful governess, aided by all kinds of masters, would begin their labours with me the very next morning.

She ended in her stately way—

"William did not wait for my consent, nor did you know, perhaps, that it is unbecoming of a maiden to engage herself without that consent. Nevertheless, should you be diligent and prove yourself possessed of the aptitude and the qualities which he believes to be in you, that consent will not be withheld. Understand me, Pleasance, William is of age, and in two years' time or so will be called upon to assume the chief command of this great firm. He can marry without my consent, if he wishes. For your own happiness, and in obedience to the Fifth Commandment, you will study to obtain my approval. I do not deny that I could have wished—yes, that I most strongly wished—my son to form an alliance with one of gentle birth. You must try to remove this disappointment."

Then my new manner of life began. It was, indeed, different from the old.

For the free wild country—the confinement of a city mansion. For gardens, fields, and sea-beach—the flags of a city square. For fresh air—smoke. For entire idleness—hard and unremitting toil. For freedom—the strict and stately manners of the time. For running and climbing about the cliffs—a daily drive in a stately coach, with a fat coachman on the hammer-cloth and two tall footmen behind. For doing everything myself—having a lady's-maid of my own. For the

companionship of Dan, with his pipe and his glass of brandy-grog—the stately dame who sat watching me with blind eyes, and the patient middle-aged lady, my governess, who listened kindly to my troubles and smoothed the road to knowledge. What things I learned, of which before I had never even guessed! Every morning I practised for two hours on the pianoforte, or harpsichord, as Madam called it. After breakfast came the masters. There was M. Elie Lemoine, master of dancing and deportment—he was my favourite, because I took to dancing with great readiness; a singing master; a refugee French lady, of courtly manners, to teach me French; one of the clerks, an elderly man with a wife and large family, who was permitted to increase his income by giving me lessons in writing; and a professor of elocution, who taught me to read with propriety.

With all this work before me, I had little time to think about poor Will. One day, however, John Huntspill came to see me, and requested that I would favour him by walking in the square with him for a few minutes.

He told me that Madam was growing anxious about her son. His story, to put her off the scent, was that he was going to the West Indies. And the West Indian mails had come in, but no letter, naturally enough, had arrived from Will Campion.

"Everything depends," he said, "on there being no inquiry. I have, for my own part, ascertained by a Portsmouth correspondent in whom I can trust, that Mr. William is now at sea. Madam would die of shame were she to learn the truth. I see nothing for it but to feign a letter from him. I have written it, and propose to bring it to-morrow as coming from the office. It will doubtless be for you to read it aloud. We are embarked in a course of falsehoods. From one deceit springs many. Far, far better had Mr. William at once confessed his name and position, and obtained, as he certainly would have done, his Majesty's pardon for a boyish escapade."

Yes, we were indeed embarked in a course of falsehood. Not one letter did we write, but many—four every year.

John Huntspill wrote them, getting his descriptions of West India scenery from all sorts of sources, avoiding the islands of Jamaica, Barbadoes, and St. Kitts, in which the house had correspondents. Then he would bring in his precious missive, announcing calmly that a mail was in from the West Indies bringing a letter for Madam. Lady Campion always took it, felt it, remarked how the smell of the vessel clung to the paper, and then putting it into my hands, commanded me to read it. In this way we carried on a regular correspondence, and though from time to time Madam complained that her son did not send direct answers to her questions (which we could not be expected to know), we managed to make things hang together, and the poor lady never suspected. Nevertheless it went to my heart, and John Huntspill used to throw a guilty glance at me when she folded up the letter carefully, and placed it in her bosom, as if she was pressing her son to her heart. Also, on the days when a letter arrived she was silent, and would request to be left alone in her room.

No letter really came from Will at all. He was fighting the French somewhere. That made me tremble at night, thinking of the almost daily news, which was shouted about the streets, of another engagement and another victory, with the dreadful list of killed which followed after. Yet John Huntspill bade me hope. Among the lists, so far, he had not seen the name of William Campion, or those of Dan and his boys.

So the days passed on. Lady Campion did not mix in general society, but she received at dinner, on certain days, a few old friends of her husband. These dinners, indeed, were magnificent, but one always wished to be a spectator instead of an actor in an entertainment which began at six, and from which even the ladies could not escape before nine. As for the gentlemen, they remained over their port, and I think many of them remained too long.

On Sundays we went to a City church, where the clergyman wore an immense wig, and had a trick of smacking his lips between his words, which always amused me. Thus he

would say: "Now the sons of Eli"—smack—"were sons of Belial"—smack, smack—"they knew not the lord"—smack. He always preached a sermon of the same length, exactly measured—counting the introductory prayer and the concluding benediction—to the space of half an hour. He was a good old man, something like my poor old friend the Rev. Benjamin Burden, fond of port and good living, benevolent, learned, and holding strong opinions on the authority of the clergy.

CHAPTER VII.

'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY.

DAY followed day, and season followed season. I had been with Lady Campion nearly two years. I had been so long in the great quiet house, where no footfall was ever heard on the thick carpets, so long with the stately lady who saw everything with blind eyes, that the old life seemed quite gone and lost. No more running and singing; and if, as happened sometimes at first, a sense of weariness would fall upon me, Madam, who divined everything, would admonish me—

"It is for Will's sake, Pleasance."

And for his dear sake, what labour, what weariness, could not be borne?

We did not stay all the time in the City. Lady Campion had a house at Chertsey, whither for three months in the year we repaired, governess, lessons, and all. There a horse was kept for my own riding, and a groom to protect me. There I could ramble about a park where there were deer, whom I taught to come at my call, and eat out of my hand. And there was the river. I do not know whether it was more delightful for me to watch the current of the Thames, slipping silently away, or the waves of Rousdon come tumbling along the shore, rolling over each other in ceaseless sport. When September vanished, and the leaves were yellow, we left Chertsey and drove back to our City house, in a carriage almost as grand as that of the lord mayor.

No letter from Will all this time; not one line.

We kept up the deceitful correspondence between Will and his mother. What travels we contrived for him! What adventures John Huntspill and I imitated from books, or invented out of our own head! What hairbreadth escapes! What romantic incidents! Madam had no suspicion. She watched for the arrival of the letters; she had them read and re-read to her; she learned them all by heart; she quoted them as admirable specimens of the best modern style; she dated events from incidents in the letters. Such a thing happened when she heard how her son had captured an alligator—been wrecked on the coast of Cuba—marched inland with the Honduras Indians—or rescued the starving slaves abandoned on a West Indian key. We might have laughed but for the dreadful fear that possessed our souls, of which we never dared to speak, that fear which made John Huntspill look through every list of killed and wounded, which blanched my cheek at every announcement of another naval action. For Will, we knew, was before the mast, and gone afloat to fight the French.

They were all victories in those days. Surely there was never a time when a nation was so brave as in the time of that long war. There was no note of hesitation then—no timid counsels. Girl as I was, I gloried in the spirit of the country when, with one consent, the nation flew to arms to resist the threatened invasion. And one could not choose but exult when the brave sailors went out to fight and conquer, with never a thought of striking the good old flag. I seem to see again the newsboys flying through the streets shouting the news of another glorious victory—to see the people in the streets buy the hand-bills and shake hands with each other, strangers though they might be. I forget the other side of the picture—the trembling women, the orphaned children, myself beating down the terror of my heart. I remember only the glory of it. Poor Madam, who knew nothing of this fear, took, of course, the greatest interest in the doings of the English fleets. There could not be too many actions to please her; every action was a victory;

every victory reduced the enemy's resources, and enabled her own great ships to perform their voyages in greater safety. Every day after breakfast I read aloud the *Morning Post*, especially that portion of the paper which gave the naval intelligence.

One morning I read the news of the Battle of Trafalgar.

The list of casualties would be published in a few days. John Huntspill and I went about with heavy hearts. He did not dare to meet my eyes. For his Portsmouth correspondent had found out that all our four were on board the *Victory*.

We had illuminations in the City to celebrate the event on the Day of Rejoicing. We drove in state to church to offer up our far from humble offering; we invited guests for a feast of thanksgiving; we sent money for the poor in token of gratitude; and we gave orders that the rejoicings of the house of Campion & Co., should excel in splendour those of every other private house. The front of the house was covered over with a trellis-work, on which were fixed thousands of oil-lamps of different colours, arranged in patriotic designs. In the centre was the lion and unicorn with the words "God save King George!" Above was the union jack with the legend "Honour to the glorious dead!" I drew out the plan by Madam's instructions. She thought me wanting in enthusiasm, and delivered a little speech on the part which should be borne by women in the glory of their country. Above all, she said—her words fell upon me as a bad omen—above all, women must be ready for the sake of their country to imperil, without a murmur, the lives of husbands, lovers, or sons.

Besides the oil-lamps for the house illumination Lady Campion devised another and a more original manifestation of joy. She procured a ship's boat, which she caused to be mounted upon wheels, decorated with masts and flags, and manned by a dozen jolly tars, and a band of music. The band was to play patriotic airs, the boat was to be dragged through the streets, the sailors were to sing; the masts being adorned with festoons of oil-lamps. The chief duty impressed

upon the men was that they were to keep sober, if they could, until midnight, when a puncheon of rum would be broached for them in the square of Great St. Simon Apostle. On the morning of this joyful day John Huntspill, in paying his daily visit to Madam, handed me quietly a letter. It was addressed to me—I had seen the writing once before, in the parish register—by the rector of Rousdon. Could it be from Will? I hastened away, and tore it open with trembling fingers. It was not from Will. It was from Dan Gulliver, and it was the saddest letter that ever a girl received.

"My dear Pretty," said poor old Dan,—"We have made the port of Portsmouth, with the admiral aboard in his coffin. Jephthah was killed in the action with a chain-shot, which cut him in two pieces. My poor, pretty Pleasance! don't cry too much, but Mr. Campion fell overboard on the way home, and is consequently drowned. This is bad news for you, I am afraid; and for me too. Job sends his love, and he says he is alive, and he wishes it had been him.—Your affectionate, Dan Gulliver."

That is the news which greeted me on the day of illumination for the victory of Trafalgar!

My governess came to me. I sent her away with some excuse, and sat down by myself, saying over and over again, so that I should be able to feel the whole bitterness of despair; "Will is drowned! Will is drowned! We shall never see him again!"

John Huntspill came in search of me. He saw by my face what had happened. He took the letter from my fingers, and read it. "Poor Pleasance!" he said. "Poor, poor child!"

I think he must have sat with me all that morning. I know he talked from time to time, but I forget what he said. Presently I began to understand something. "We must not let Madam know," he repeated. "She must never know. We will prepare a letter from—from her son"—he paused, and for a moment his voice broke—"stating that he is going

on some expedition up the country; and then no more letters at all will come afterwards, and you will mourn together—you and his mother. But she must never know her son's real end."

Had I had my will I would have gone straight to Madam, and told her all. But it seemed more merciful that she should be spared the details which he wished his mother never to know.

"For his sake, Pleasance," urged John Huntspill, "for his sake be brave, keep up your heart before her. Let not my lady's pride as well as her heart be broken. She must never know. For his sake she must never know."

He would not leave me till I promised that I would do my best. During the rejoicings I too would seem to rejoice.

O heavy day! O day which seemed as if it would never pass! At one I was called to luncheon with Madam. She was in excellent spirits—happier than I had ever known her.

Presently she asked sharply—

"What is the matter, Pleasance? You are crying?"

"I was thinking, Madam," I sobbed, "of the brave fellows who are killed."

"Yes, but there is a time to mourn and a time to rejoice. You were thinking, my child, of my son?" I did not answer. "Come to me, Pleasance." She was sitting after luncheon in her arm-chair beside the window. "Come to me."

I knelt at her feet, and buried my head in her lap.

"He is a long time away, is he not? But I write to my son, and tell him about you, child. When I wrote last I sent him word that I would not oppose his desire. Yes, Pleasance, I have watched you more narrowly than you know. You will make my son happy. Take my blessing, my dear."

She laid her hand upon my head solemnly. Ah! if she knew—if she only knew!

In the evening, at half-past five, we had a great dinner, which lasted until half-past nine, and then we all sallied forth, including Madam, into the street, protected by a body-guard of the house's porters armed with stout cudgels. The streets were full of people, shouting, fighting, and drinking. If they

passed a house without illumination, they broke the windows. Should we never finish? I thought.

Midnight came at length, and the boat with the sailors came back to the square. The puncheon of rum was rolled into the square: there was more shouting, more fighting, until the contents were all gone. We were at the open window, looking on. At last the rum was all drunk up, the mob dispersed, the oil-lamps went out one by one, and we were able to go to bed.

"Good-night, my daughter," said Madam, as she retired, exulting and happy, to her room. It was the first time she had called me her daughter. Oh the bitterness! that such a day of death and bereavement should be chosen for this act of grace and kindness.

Let me not speak more than I can help—the pain even now is too great—of my own sufferings at this time. Remember that I had to wear all day long a mask of cheerfulness. If I failed for a moment there was something in the quick sympathies of the blind lady which enabled her to perceive it at once.

This torture endured for a fortnight. Then the end came, in a way which we little expected, and had not guarded against.

It was in the forenoon, about half-past eleven, before John Huntspill had left Madam, and before the arrival of my singing master, who was due at twelve. I was alone in my own room, free for a moment from tutors, governess, and my lady—free to think of the past, my only solace. My own maid—she was the only one in the house who knew that I had some secret sorrow—came to tell me that there was a sailor, an old sailor, in the hall, who wished to see me. Who could it be but Dan Gulliver?

It was indeed old Dan himself. He came upstairs in his slow and quiet way. I saw him before he saw me. He was dressed like a common sailor; his hair was greyer and his dear old face graver; there was no other change.

He stood in the doorway. He actually did not recognise me.

"Dan," I cried, springing into his arms. "Dan! Don't you know me?"

Then he did, and laid his hands upon my shoulders, holding me back and looking at me, before he kissed my cheek.

"My pretty!" he said, "and growed so tall. And such a lady. To be sure she always was as sweet-mannered as any lady in the land. And oh, my pretty! he's gone! he's gone! Don't take on; don't take on."

"Tell me all about it, Dan. Tell me. And poor Jephthah gone too."

"Cut in two halves, he was, with a chain-shot. Died in action, my boy Jephthah. But Mr. Campion, poor young gentleman, he died by drownding. Fell off the yard in the night, and never was seen—how could he be seen?—afterwards. Poor young gentleman!"

"O Dan!—Dan—my heart will break!"

"Cry, pretty, cry as much as ever you can. But cryin' won't bring him back. Cry now, while I tell you all about him.

"They knowed our story aboard the *Victory*. I was Smuggler Dan. The boys were Smuggler Job and T'other Job—because, I'm sorry to say, they mariners aboard his Majesty's ships never knew which was which. And so Jephthah, who is now cut in two pieces, was never knowed as such. And Mr. Campion they called Gentleman Jack. Now remember—some young gentlemen, after getting a three years' billet in the fo'ksle for smuggling, would ha' sat down and grizzled. Mr. Campion wasn't one o that sort. 'Providin' always,' he says to me—'providin' always, Dan, as my mother never finds out, why, what odds is a three years' cruise?' And merry with it. Once he ketches hold of a fiddle, the fo'ksle's alive; when he began to play you'd ha' thought the fiddle was talkin', not him a playing. All round him the men would be sittin' an' singin', till the whole ship was as good-tempered as if there wasn't a bos'n nor petty-officer aboard.

"Well, you may depend on it, pretty, that it wasn't long

before the officers got to know what a uncommon sailor they'd got shipped aboard the *Victory*, for a little run as he'd made across the Channel one fine night, and it wasn't long before Captain Hardy hisself, finding Mr. Campion on the quarter-deck, axed him—ay! before the admiral—who he was, and how he came aboard. Mr. Campion, no more afraid of speaking to the captain than to the carpenter, he told him, touching his hat, that he had been caught smuggling, that they'd all got off with three years, for the information they gave to the Admiralty, and that he hoped to give satisfaction to his honour so long as he was aboard, after which time, he said, he should give up sailoring before the mast. Captain Hardy he laughed, and the admiral laughed; and then his lordship, who ought to know, said, in his quiet easy way, that a man was no worse sailor for being a gentleman born, but that gentlemen ought not to run cargoes across the Channel. After that I think the word was passed down to make some sort of difference with us. Anyway, the worst of the bos'ns never laid rope's end on none of us four.

"Come the action off Trafalgar. My pretty, we done our duty—Job and Jephthah and Mr. Campion and me—till that chain-shot came, and all I saw o' my boy Jephthah was two halves and a pool of blood.

"When the admiral fell they told me off to help carry him down. That took best part of a quarter of an hour. The action lasted half an hour longer. When the firing ceased and one could look round, I saw Mr. Campion alongside of Job, alive and hearty. As for Jephthah, that poor boy was throwed overboard in two halves.

"We had nasty weather on the way home. One of the prizes foundered. And one dark night, in that nasty weather, all in the dark, poor Mr. Campion fell overboard and was drownded."

I listened to the story, my head in my hands. When Dan finished, I burst out into fresh sobbing and crying. I forgot about Lady Campion and everything. I never looked up. While Dan told his story I lay hiding my face in the sofa and crying, while the door stood wide open, and Madam

herself stood there listening to every word, and with her John Huntspill, with white cheeks and troubled brow. I looked up in my grief, but sprang to my feet, terrified by the look of Madam. She was drawn to her full height, leaning on her stick; her face was perfectly white; her lips trembled; her sightless eyes seemed to pour lightning on poor Dan; she was terrible in her despair and wrath.

"Tell me," she said—"not you, girl; not you—tell me, man, smuggler, sailor, whatever you are, who was this Mr. Campion who fell overboard and was drowned?"

"He was your ladyship's son, and my Pleasance's sweetheart," said Dan simply.

"And he was a smuggler too, was he?"

"No, Madam, not a smuggler; only once, for a boyish freak, he must needs run across with me for a single venture. And when we were all tried, my lady, at Dorchester 'sizes, we got off for three years aboard, 'acause of the news we picked up on our way back."

"Tried!—my son was tried!—with common sailors! He was tried and 'got off!'—he was sent to sea!"

"And he is dead," said John Huntspill, in solemn sadness.

"He is dead!" echoed his mother. "And you knew, girl, you knew that he was at sea, a common sailor?"

"Alas!" I moaned, "I knew only too well."

"That you concealed from me. Did you know on Illumination Day that my son was dead?"

"I knew that then," I replied.

She was silent for a space. Her eyes were dry and her lips parched. Had she wept, one might have had hope.

"All that day," she said, "you gazed upon a rejoicing mother who had lost her son; you, who had lost your lover, rejoiced with the rest."

"Nay, nay!" interposed John Huntspill. "She pretended to save you. Listen, Madam. It was by Mr. William's own wish—nay, command—that you were kept in ignorance of what happened. I knew; I agreed that it would be better. As no letters came from Mr. William we wrote letters, and pretended that they were from him—for his sake;

we read them to you—for his sake. When the dreadful news came, I resolved that we would keep up the deception—for his sake; so that you should never know when and how your son had died."

"Get me my desk, John Huntspill."

He went obediently, and brought back her great mahogany desk, in which were Will's pretended letters, all neatly tied up. She opened the desk and found the parcel.

"Take them! Henceforth, John Huntspill, you are no longer my confidential friend. I cannot trust you! Trust you? O Heaven! can I trust any one? Is there man, woman, or child in this great world that will not lie?"

Poor woman! poor mother! She stood where she had heard the whole, just within the doorway, John Huntspill beside her; before her, Dan Gulliver, amazed, and not knowing what to say or do; and myself, overwhelmed with misery.

"We must put some kind of order into our affairs," said Madam. "You will send my lawyer to me at once, John Huntspill. Life is precarious, even with the old as well as with the young. I must make new dispositions. And I would be alone—altogether alone—in this house. You will take away the girl. If she wants money, let me know. My son's betrothed must not starve because my son is dead—is dead!" she repeated, with a sad dropping of her voice.

I threw myself at her knees and caught her by the hand.

"O Madam! dear Madam! forgive me! Say that you forgive me, for Will's sweet sake!"

"Forgive!" she echoed in a hard voice. "Forgive! what does it mean? I shall not seek to do you harm. You shall have money. What more do you want? You have fooled me and played with me. You have tempted my son to destruction, you and your smuggler friends. My son, who should have been an honour to me and to this city, like his father before him, has died in disgrace. Forgive you? Yes, I will forgive you—when the sea gives up its dead."

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF THE GOLDEN MIST.

WE were back again at Rousdon—Dan Gulliver and Job and I—to begin again such portion of the old life as was possible. "We will go on," said Dan sadly, "just as we used to go on before ever he came. We will forget that he ever came. You will forget that you are a young lady."

Alas! not only was the old time gone, but nothing like it could ever come again. Will had torn up the old time and thrown it away. It was dead. But the memory was left. One could sit and think till day after day that summer of 1803 unrolled itself again, and I could remember every word he said, even the lightest, with every gesture and every look.

The people at Lyme welcomed us all with a cordiality which meant not only gratitude for the past, but hope for the future. Since that dreadful day of rebuke when Joshua's delivery of goods was discovered to be so much sea-water and nothing else, the town had been without brandy. Campion's fine old Jamaica rum, well enough in its way, was a poor substitute for the right good Nantes which Dan had provided. A taste had been developed which was doomed to disappointment, for no one succeeded Dan. A man cannot suddenly become a smuggler. Relations have to be established on the opposite shore, a connection to be formed at home; it is a business which is the growth of years. Now Dan represented the third, and his sons the fourth generation, of a long career in the trade, during which the whole business for this part of the coast had dropped into the hands of Gulliver and Company, smugglers to the nobility, gentry, and clergy of Lyme Regis and the surrounding country. Imagine, therefore, what a blow it was to the district when the fatal arrest happened, followed by the dreadful discovery of the sea-water! So that, when we came home again, there were visits paid to us not only of congratulation on our return, and condolence for poor Jephthah, but also of hope and temptation. Mr. Mallock, J.P., walked all the way from Lyme on purpose

to see his old friend again, and to hint that the naked condition of his cellar, as regarded French brandy, was deplorable. The Rev. Benjamin Burden, who, long before the end of Dan's two years' captivity, had got through his four kegs, came to say that he was reduced to cider, and that of the thinnest. Dan received these visitors with great politeness, but held out no hopes that the old trade would be revived. First, he said, the *Dancing Polly* was gone; he should never again find a boat he could trust so well; then his nephew, Joshua Meech, was gone, pressed while busy with the kegs; though how them kegs turned out to be sea-water, he couldn't say; and Jephthah was gone; and he was getting old, and a second conviction meant a capital sentence. Then his money in John Huntspill's hands was bringing him a little income by itself, and he had given his promise not to smuggle any more. I think the old man had learned to look on smuggling, compared with the great game of war, as a small thing.

It was strange to come back to this queer atmosphere, in which crime appeared no sin, and law-breaking was encouraged by the administrators of the law. The strangeness passed off after awhile, and then the two years of life in the stately house of the old City square appeared, in its turn, dreamy and unreal.

We came back to the old place, and began, in a broken-winged way, to resume the old ways. Then, naturally, I began to make the house and the housekeeping more in accordance with my recently acquired ideas. Dan acquiesced, wondering; Job tried to adapt himself to my ways with the goodwill which always distinguished him, but with less success. He betook himself to work on the farm; and, in assuming the smockfrock, immediately changed, just as he used to do, the roll of the sailor for the slouch of the labourer.

John Huntspill wrote to me from time to time. Madam made no sign of relenting. She never asked for news of me; she had withdrawn her confidence from him; she never spoke to any one about her son; she sat silent all the day long, pale and stern. Her heart was full of bitterness.

When Dan began to talk about Joshua, and to regret the misfortunes which befell him, I considered that it would be well to conceal my share in them, and the fact of his treachery. When he came home again—should he ever come home—it would be time to consider what steps should be taken. For the present it seemed better to leave the old man in the belief that Joshua's troubles were undeserved. Indeed, it would have been difficult to persuade him that his own nephew could be guilty of so foul and dastardly a crime. For my own part, I hoped that he would never come home again. "A life for a life," I said bitterly. "As he destroyed my Will's life, so let his be taken away."

It was in the dark days of December that we came back to Rousdon. The wintry weather suited the misery of my mind. Yet after a time the old charm of the sea fell upon me and soothed me. Dan painted and caulked the little boat. I put out to sea in her again during the soft smooth mornings, common in winter on the south coast, when the sun floats bathed in a soft yellow mist, itself a disk of molten gold; when, if you see a boat, her masts and hull are wrapped round with a yellow haze, like those of a boat in a dream. Sometimes Dan came with me, and we sailed or rowed, silent, thinking of the days that could come no more.

"There was no one like him," said Dan, one day when we had been sitting quiet in the boat for an hour and more. "There never was no one like him, and never will be. Joshua had his good points. For a rough night at sea, and a ready hand, Joshua never had his equal. But Joshua was grumpy. He took after his father in such respects. Now Mr. Campion, he was always laughing, always talking, always ready to do a hand's-turn for everybody. Nobody like him. And to think of——"

"Don't, Dan, don't," I murmured, with the tears coming into my eyes.

We had a dreary Christmas that winter, though after service in the poor old barn, which had gone nearly roofless since Dan went away, the Rev. Mr. Burden came to take his dinner with us. A turkey from the farmyard furnished the

meal, and afterwards Dan, with a guilty look, produced a bottle of rum. Mr. Burden shook his head sadly, but spent the rest of the day over the drink in company with Dan, and departed in the evening with legs which showed a tendency to tie themselves into knots.

Then the days began to grow longer, and the spring flowers appeared on the Undercliff, till all the ground was covered with the pale primrose. It must have been about this time that everything began to look as if it belonged to a dream. I am not sure when that strange feeling began; I knew, however, that Dan used to follow me about, and was loth to let me go out of his sight, for fear, I suppose, that being in this dreamy way I might fall into mischief and do myself some injury. Also, he began to talk of doctors and going to Lyme for a change. Poor old Dan!

The place was so quiet, so remote from all external influences, that one fell back easily upon one's own brooding thoughts; I had no duties and no distractions. Dan was not a great talker, and Job was actually dumb, so that I lived in a dream, and it was a dream of the past.

The spring in its turn passed away, and was followed by the soft warm summer, with days when I would sit a whole day through beneath the shade of the rocks, watching the waves. Here Dan used to come after me, tempting me to go out in the boat with him, to fish with him, to walk with him, anything to rouse me from that state of dreamy despair. I used to sit and listen unmoved—unmoved I saw the tears roll down his cheeks—they only irritated me. Sometimes I think that in those days I must have been mad.

One night I could not sleep. It was in the middle of August, when there is little darkness on the sea, but only a luminous twilight. I rose about midnight, and dressed myself quickly, thinking I should escape Dan's attentions, and stole downstairs into the open air, just as I had done two years and a half before, to watch for the return of the *Dancing Polly*. It was not, as then, a rough and boisterous night; there had been all day a fresh breeze blowing from the south-east. This had died away, and there was little air

left. I slowly passed down the well-known path, to sit by the shore and think of my poor dead Will. I sat there while the night slipped away. I was facing the mouth of the little creek, looking straight out to sea.

When the morning broke there was a light fog upon the water, which the sun when it rose coloured with a beautiful hue, changing every minute. I remembered then—Heaven knows how!—that it was the 14th of August, and three years since first I saw my Will. As I gazed seawards, look-through the fog, I became aware of a ghost.

It was the ghost of a boat shining in the golden mist, all gorgeous with colours. The hull was yellow and blue and crimson, the colours changing every moment; the sail looked like a sheet of azure silk, and the spirit who stood behind the mast—that was the spirit of my Will—was all glorified. I stood quite still, fearing that the vision would fade. I had often, before this, seen him in dreams of the night, but never in the broad day, and in dreams he vanished so swiftly that I could never find time to speak to him. The boat seemed, at first, to be floating on the water—but she was not. In the light air of the morning she was slowly making for the land; and presently she passed through the mist, and lost all the gorgeous colours which the fog had lent her. But the ghost of my Will remained, pale, as all ghosts of drowned men should be. He saw me, as the bow of the boat grated on the stones—he cried my name—he threw up his arms—he leaped ashore.

"O Will, Will!" I cried, falling upon my knees before him, "let me speak to you. Do not go away as you do in the dreams. Let me speak to you. I knew you would some day think of me, and come up from the grave. Oh, what am I to say, now you are here? What can I say, dear Will, poor Will, my dead love, my lost darling, come from heaven to comfort my poor heart! Oh, it is breaking! Will, it is breaking with grief and pain!"

"Pleasance," he cried, lifting me in his strong arms, and folding me to his heart, "Pleasance, I am not dead—I am no ghost, my darling. I am come back to you again, alive

—alive. Can you not understand? O my love, my darling!"

I could not understand at first, nor for many days afterwards. But joy does not kill.

Will had, it was quite true, fallen overboard. But he was picked up by a French *chasse-marée*, and taken to France, where he lived among the fishermen, no one betraying him, till he could persuade one of them to trust him with a boat. He promised a large price, should he reach England in safety. It is needless to say that he kept his promise.

When I was able to listen to it all, when I could sit with my hand in his, in such happiness as never any other girl, I believe, experienced, he began to talk about our marriage. He wanted to see his mother, but he would tell her himself, not write to her. And he could not go, he said, unless I would go with him. What could I say? Of course we were married, just as he wished, he and I, in Rousdon church, by the Reverend Benjamin Burden. Will doffed his sailor's clothes for the first time, and appeared dressed as a gentleman. Dan gave me away. It was agreed that we should ride straight from the church into Lyme, and thence post direct without stopping to London.

We left Dan and Job and the poor old rector at the door of the ecclesiastical barn. Will lifted me into the saddle, and we rode slowly away, poor old Dan crying, and Will promising soon to bring me back. We had ridden half a mile or so on our way along the Seaton road, when I saw before me, just before you come to Colway Lane, a figure which seemed familiar to me. It was, indeed, only part of a figure, consisting of a man's trunk and a couple of very short wooden stumps, on which the owner was pegging his way, literally, with uncommon vigour. I was right: the back of the man was familiar to me, for the face, when we came up with its owner, was the face of Joshua Meech.

He looked round at the sound of the horses' feet. At first he did not recognise us. I was dressed in a dark-green riding-habit and wore a veil.

"Joshua," I said softly; "do you not remember us?"

"Joshua Meech, my boy," cried Will, who knew nothing of what had happened. "How goes it, mate? Where did you lose your legs, man?"

"Where a good many lost their heads, Mr. Campion"—he spoke quite cheerfully, while a horribly guilty feeling seized me—"at Trafalgar. Glad to see you safe home again, sir. The villain who did the mischief, he's well punished, he is; and serve him right."

Now no one, except myself, ever knew who the villain was.

Later on, when Dan came to see us in London, he had a good deal to tell of Joshua.

The mill was set going again, after he found his money by means of a mysterious letter with a London postmark. It had become ruinous, but the wheels were there, and Joshua began again to practice his ancient craft. He went no longer to chapel, but became a firm pillar of the Established Church, having been converted on board ship.

The way of his conversion was simple. He once, in his early days aboard, began to argue a point with the chaplain, who was so amazed at the audacity of a common sailor pretending to be skilled in theological subtleties, that he complained to the captain. The captain, a choleric man, ordered an application of the only remedy then employed for offences and disorders at sea—three dozen.

Before the first dozen had been received, Joshua felt conviction pouring in. About midway through the second, the force of the conviction was irresistible. By the end of the third he had steadfastly resolved on adhering, while on board, to the Church of England and Ireland, as by law established. And after coming ashore he continued this godly habit.

I come to the last scene of my story.

A bright morning in autumn, when even the city houses look pleasant, and the trees in the city churchyards have not yet lost their leaves, and are pleasant to the eye. We go to

the house in the square, Will and I, followed by John Huntspill. Madam has not gone to Chertsey this year.

There are no servants to meet us. John has taken care of that. We cross the hall and mount the stairs, covered with their thick Turkey carpets, which deaden every footfall. On the landing we can look into the great room which Madam always uses as her own. We can see Madam herself, sitting by the window, pale, rigid, and stern.

No one moves, no one whispers. The tears come into Will's eyes as he looks upon his mother. Presently John Huntspill takes my hand and leads me quietly into the room.

Madam looked up in her quick interrogative fashion.

"It is I, Madam," said John.

"Is there anything of importance, John Huntspill? Unless you have news to tell me, why do you come? And who is with you?"

"I have to say a thing of great importance, Madam. I bring with me a girl who has suffered much. I ask for your forgiveness for her, and for myself, for the deceit we practised upon you."

"O Madam!"—I knelt at her feet—"we have been very unhappy. Forgive me, and let us be as happy together—as we can."

"I said, Pleasance," she replied, "that I would forgive you when the sea gave up its dead. But that will be long, perhaps. We should wait—till the Judgment Day. My dear, I forgive you, for the sake of him whom we both loved. Pleasance, child"—she held out both her arms—"come and let us weep together, and go in mourning and sorrow all our days."

"Not in sorrow, Madam. Oh! not in sorrow, but in gladness. For look, the Lord is very merciful. The sea has given up its dead, and here is your son, home again, and in your arms."

SHEPHERDS ALL AND MAIDENS FAIR

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CHAPTER I.

CLEAR SKY LAND.

MORNING in Clear Sky Land. The sun has crossed the sea all the way over from smoky Liverpool; the rain was beginning when he left that city, so that he sank into the ocean, making, athwart the turbid sky, murky rainbows bleared by the smoke, which had one foot in Birkenhead and the other over Aigburth. He went at his usual pace, having no occasion to hurry, straight across the North Atlantic, regardless of a gale of wind and a storm of driving cloud. They were right in his teeth, too, all the way, so that he never saw, except at brief intervals, any of the great Allan ships on their way from Liverpool to Quebec, facing the wind as boldly as himself, and as resolutely making steady way in the teeth of those great waves which swept at their will adown the open decks. Nor did he see—which was a pity for them—the passengers making themselves as comfortable as circumstances at sea permit in the deck saloon, rolled in wraps, propped up and jammed between table and wall, reading, telling yarns, smoking, chatting about their ship and praising her good qualities, playing cards, or even singing songs; while outside, the officers, holding on to the ropes that ran along the bulwarks, plashed about in great boots, keeping one eye night and day always fixed on the compass, which hung midmast-high aft, to keep the good ship *Polynesian* on her right course. Beneath the sun lay an endless grey bank of cloud which never lifted for two thousand miles and more, and beneath the cloud lay a broad grey sea which never

brightened, for lack of the sunshine, but kept on rolling aimlessly great grey waves, which sulkily hurled themselves against the bows, and then, having effected nothing, sank down behind the conquering craft, and left their neighbours to make the next attack.

"A good beginning," the sun might have said when he saw Clear Sky Land ahead. But he was not like Jacques Cartier, a newcomer, and had seen the Atlantic every day for a good many years. So that when he reached the Straits of Belleisle, although there the summer does not begin till August the 31st, and ends on September the 1st, he knew that there were pleasant places beyond, and he went on his way cheerfully.

It was a morning in October, and the sun shone first, when foggy Newfoundland was left behind, upon the iron-bound shores of Labrador, with never a wreath of smoke left to tell of summer visitors and venturesome fishermen. As he looked up the St. Lawrence he saw to the south the low hills of Gaspé clothed with pine, and at their feet a white house or two. On the opposite side he passed the great island of Anticosti, where for seven months in the year the forty people who live there have nothing to do, nowhere to go, and no one but each other to speak to. The bears came out when the sun shone up the blue waters of the Gulf, and when they had shaken themselves up a bit, and rolled their heads in thought for a quarter of an hour or so, they began leisurely —for bears are never in a hurry—to get through the spruce woods, by paths known only to themselves, down to the beach, where the herring spawn lay thick among the kelp and seaweed. And safe out of the reach of the bears, upon a delightful ledge of rock, the seals flopped up to greet the coming day.

Farther and farther up the mighty St. Lawrence shot the arrows of the rising sun, falling on the high-peaked gables, white walls, and shining roofs of the riverside farmhouses; on the woods where the scarlet hues of the maple mingle with the dark hues of the fir; on the ships that come and go laden with timber, grain, and beef for this old country of

ours, that seems to devour so much and to send out so little; on islands laden now with purple grapes as they were when Cartier saw them for the first time, and named them the Islands of Bacchus; on many a quiet old Canadian church where the dead are asleep, little more peaceful now than when they walked in the quiet monotony of their blameless days; on the gloomy portals of the Saguenay and the crashing waters of Montmorenci. When the sun saw Quebec he saluted her, "Hail! Queen of American cities. Take thou the robe of imagery;" and then he wrapped her round with a veil of purple, through which her masts and churches, her old citadel, and the houses along her crooked and winding streets looked steeped in the light of some magic contrivance, ethereal, wonderful. Then he swiftly went on his way up the broad river; past Montreal, whose Royal hill looks down upon the city of a hundred spires; past the rapids, through the Thousand Islands; up to the bright little towns, busy and prosperous, of Lake Ontario and the stately city of Toronto, Queen City of the West; along the northern railway, passing through Barrie and the lovely scenery of Lake Simcoe. And then he came at last to the land of Clear Skies.

When, after this long journey, the sun rose upon Clear Sky Land, the creatures in the forest naturally woke up first. There were the squirrel and the chipmonk, who always sleep with one eye open; the marten, an early-riser by deliberate choice; the beaver, always weighed down with responsible work; the minks, who get their work done early, so as to be out of the way of the trapper; the fox, for similar reasons, and with an eye to poultry; the cariboo, who is a light sleeper; and the bear, who is a hungry creature, and takes his breakfast as early as he can get it.

And then the birds woke up—there are not many birds in Clear Sky Land—and began to forage for flies, of which there are plenty. And the flies, who are an unsuspicious, and even a confiding folk, woke up and prepared to enjoy themselves in the sun. Those who escaped the birds had a good time all day.

Lastly, the people in the villages and farms got up too, rubbed their eyes, and dressed themselves with more care than usual, because it was the great day of the year—the day of the Agricultural Exhibition. And then cattle lowed, sheep-bells rang, cocks crowed, turkeys gobbled, ducks quacked, donkeys cleared their throats melodiously, and another day began.

It is a land of lakes as well as of clear skies. They lie stretching out loving arms to each other, scattered thick over the face of the country. They are all alike in being wondrous beautiful, and all different in that the loveliness of every one is distinct and personal, like the loveliness of a woman, but each with the characteristics of her kind. Some are studded with islets, each a rising mound, on which the hemlock and the maple stand side by side with pine and tamarisk. On these islets are the wigwams of Indians; on the shores are their brown children playing; among the waters run in and out, or lie lazily floating, the birch canoes of those of the yellowskins who have yet energy enough left to go fishing. Some are broad sheets of placid water; some are narrow and winding as Windermere; all are fringed with forest, like Grasmere, and all abound in fish. Behind the shore rise the low hills with their woods yet untouched. There a solemn silence reigns, unbroken, save rarely, even by the voice of bird; few settlements have yet been planted in that forest primeval. The pine and the hemlock share the ground with the maple. Clear Sky Land calls aloud for men. Look again at the forest as you glide beneath it in the little country-made steamer. It is late autumn, yet the foliage of the underwood is as bright and as fresh as the foliage of early June in an English wood. Look deeper, search for the sombre shades of the European forests. There are none. It is the characteristic of a Canadian forest that it is all bright throughout, as if the sun shone quite through the leaves overhead, and the tops of the trees were transparent. It is like a scene of Fairyland. You have never seen any theatrical scene, even at Drury Lane, half so sweet, half so

touching in the green brightness of its colouring, as the forest that borders the lake. See, again, the steamer has left the latter, and turned her bows up a river where the trees come down to the edge of the bank. We go very slowly, and, but for the dip of the wheels, silently—on either side the gleaming forest. You think, perhaps, that you have seen nature elsewhere at her best as a colourist; you have recollections of tropical sunrises, of Italian evenings, of African skies, of Atlantic sunsets; you remember the peaks of the Tyrol, the passes of the Alps—well, own that this forest surpasses all. The underwood is green and bright with a sunshine which must be wholly due to the transparency of the trees above; but the maple-leaves have changed their colour and are transformed. They are crimson, they are scarlet, they are ruby-red, they are a deep rich golden yellow, they are brown edged with red, they are purple, they are of every hue and tinge that the eye of painter has conceived or the hand of nature executed. And now the sun lifts his head above the opposite bank and they spring into life and light, like a statue touched by the finger of a god.

The steamer groans and backs and plunges, and finally fetches up alongside of a little wooden pier. All may get out, and let us make the best way we can to Dee Bank, where the exhibition of this year is to be held.

An empty saw-mill, newly built over a stream of rushing water. Beyond the mill a wooden bridge; above the bridge a fall of water over moss-grown boulders—did I explain that it is a land of falls, as well as of clear skies and sunny lakes?—above the fall, forest, labyrinthine, many-coloured; at right hand, forest; at left hand, forest; before and behind, forest—on every side but one, and on that side is the settlement of Dee Bank. There is a township of half-a-dozen houses; they are frame-houses, built of wood, and standing round an irregular sort of place, the most prominent structure being the school. There is one large meadow wholly cleared, and there are fields beyond where the black stumps are thick upon the ground. There are not many fields,

because Dee Bank is a small settlement; there are many stumps because it is a new settlement. No doubt, if we visit Dee Bank again in twenty years, we shall find a population of as many thousands as there are now hundreds. There will be half-a-dozen churches; there will be a daily paper; there will be great hotels. At present this territory is laying the foundations of her future. She has her lakes, her rivers, her falls, her unrivalled beauty; she has already her scanty population of hardy and thrifty yeomen. She is to be the mother of many, and the producer of much. At present it must be owned that the black stumps give the country an unfinished look, as if the people had just moved in, or had been having a universal washing-day, so that they had had no time to tidy up and fix things neat.

The big lumber-mill is turned into an exhibition-house. On the first floor are the exhibits arranged in seemly order, while the judges go round to assign the prizes. There are butter, cheese, and bread; there is maple sugar; there are preserves; there is work in knitting, sewing, and spinning; there are vegetables—enormous pumpkins, great wealth of carrots, potatoes and turnips; there are barrels of great tomatoes, things which no Canadian can resist, whether raw or cooked; and there are barrels upon barrels of grain.

The judges go round with anxious faces; this is real business; the land is, as it were, on trial. Shall Red River boast because of her grain? Look here—and here. Saw man ever finer vegetables, bigger pumpkins, more beautiful tomatoes? Can the whole world produce better apples? Go to.

The ladies follow, judging the household work. Not only the land, but the house also, is on its trial. As they go slowly round, making notes, their faces grow more cheerful. In Clear Sky Land, they seem to say, the girls can hold their own against any in the old country. Saw ever woman a finer pair of knitted socks? Can there be broidery more beautiful and more useful than this child's garment? That is by a Norwegian girl, one of the three hundred who came here a year ago rich in health and vigour, stalwart descendants of the hardy Norsemen, but poor in purse, which matters little

in Muskoka. They were waiting about the day after landing, feeling lonely, strange, and desolate in the emigrants' quarter, when King Dufferin heard of them and came down and cheered them up—that genial sovereign—by giving them welcome to the Dominion in their own tongue, so that first they all cried and then they all laughed. Give the Norwegian girl the first prize. Very likely she will send the socks to King Dufferin.

Outside, more business. They are judging cattle, horses, pigs, and farming implements. The young men are there, serious and thoughtful, and with them the old. This is no playtime of idle villagers. There are no labourers leaning against posts anxious for beer time. Every one is interested, because every one has a personal stake in the friendly contest. He who is worsted may learn a wrinkle from the conqueror. It is a game of real earnest, in which the last great prize open to all is—fortune and comfort. You may look at the men. There is a Lowlander; he was a shepherd to the Marquis of Verybroad-acres; his ancestors were yeomen of Scotland, but the land has long since gone; he is a hard-headed Scot, with high cheek-bones and a long square chin. Dollars are ringing in that man's pocket already. Yet it is not five years since he came over, a man without a penny; he saved fifty pounds in eighteen months as a farm labourer; he took up a free-grant plot of land; the next year he wrote for his girl to come over to him; and now he is a substantial man. The next man to him is a Somersetshire lad; he brought money over with him—not much, but some. He bought a cleared farm, and he grows beef for the London market. Some day he will be rich. And wherever they came from, whatever they were, they are now hard-handed, hard-headed farmers, who neglect no chance, and spare themselves no toil, catch at every new invention, try every kind of crop, and are determined, since the land of Clear Skies has to be planted, to clear away its fairy forests where the sunshine sleeps in the leaves, so that it shall be changed into the land of Sweet Fields, the garden and glory of the Dominion.

They are not well dressed. Even their best friends will at

once admit so much. They wear, indeed, every kind of serviceable garb, except what the Americans call store clothes and stovepipe hats. As for the hats, indeed, all the old hats of all the world—even the old hats from the Jews' quarters in Poland—must surely go out to Muskoka. There is no accounting otherwise for the extreme badness of the hats and their incredible age. Only one young fellow of the whole assemblage can claim to be fairly well roofed. He might pass muster at a meet, so neat, so well dressed in serviceable corduroys, stout boots, and many-pocketed coat, is he. That is John Pomeroy, son of Mrs. Pomeroy, and nephew of Mr. Burdacomb, Reeve of Sheridan Town. His is the best buggy, his are the best train of plough horses, his is the best bull. And it is his mother who gets the first prize for butter.

This young man is four-and-twenty years of age. He is six feet high, and his shoulders are broad and square; his face has not that full-blown rosiness about it which belongs to a healthy young Englishman of his own age; the clear dry air has toned him down; his cheeks are thinner; his limbs are more slender, but not the less strong. In his hands the heavy Canadian axe is as light as a penknife, and lops off great boughs as a lady would trim a rose-bush. His chest is deep; his voice is deep; he walks as one who has no fear or trouble in his mind; his face has yet the seal of innocence upon it, because he has never seen a town—except once when he went to Toronto, and found himself in that metropolis almost stifled by the houses. His hazel eyes are clear; his step is long and elastic. Happy the woman who calls such a lad her son; happier still the girl who calls such a man her lover.

Mr. Stephen Burdacomb, his uncle, is one of the judges. When his nephew's cattle are brought up, he shakes his head, and will not give them any prize, and then the crowd assign him the prize by acclamation. He is a substantial farmer; dollars have accrued to him; he is Reeve of his township; and he is very greatly respected, partly because he is successful, partly because he is reputed to be so wise, partly because he is a man of very, very few words. Nature

has given him the faculty of work, which is an invaluable profession by itself, especially in Muskoka; nature has also given him an unerring eye for the points of a cow, the qualities of a pig, and the value of a farm-horse. He knows land intimately, so to speak, and can read off its capabilities as if out of a book. But he has preserved his old rusticity; he looks, walks, and speaks like the small farmer he was in England; and he very seldom speaks, because speech is a trouble to him. Nature denied him the power of expression; she made him, save for the few hundred words required for the farm-life, dumb; and by the time John Pomeroy left school, which was at fifteen, there was nothing about the place that he could not manage as well as any grown man.

It is half-past twelve. There is a general movement, with a universal look of increased seriousness, in the direction of one of the houses in the township. It means Dinner. At this ordinary all dine together, taking turns in batches one after the other. There is no distinction of rank to observe —there are no masters and no servants, because all are alike in the land of yeomen. Dinner of roast beef, with huckleberry-pie and apple-pie; dinner for five hundred men, all true English-born, with the extraordinary and amazing fact that there is no beer. Imagine a collection of hungry Englishmen contentedly sitting down to dinner without beer. Instead they have tea, or milk, or water; but mostly tea. Actually nothing to drink at Dee Bank at all; and not a single enterprising publican to run up a booth, and make men stupid with fiery whisky and adulterated beer. Not a place within ten miles where a drop of anything can be got. It seems sad to us, dwellers in a foggy climate, but we need not waste our pity. They want in Clear Sky Land neither sympathy nor beer. The sharp and bracing air, the plenty and perfection of their food, the habit, without the pledge, of temperance—all these together make them contented, though they never see wine or whisky. And for appetites—but watch the guests if you would understand what feeding means. Quick, neat-handed Phillis, another plateful here, as large a slice as the ox can boast; more

potatoes—saw one ever mealier ones?—more cabbage and more beans for Tom, who is looking about him with wistful eyes; another square foot or so of fat and lean for Jack; a cubic six inches or thereabouts, with a bit of the brown corner, for Harry; more tomatoes; more apple-pie, and the sugar this way; huckleberry pie for ten, if you please; more bread, plenty of bread; more tea for everybody. A great, a Gargantuan feast; and at six o'clock it will be done all over again, for this is a land of plenty, and everybody is always hungry.

We do not talk much during the dinner, because we sit down to eat. After we have eaten we go back and talk more—we talk with the girls, who are here in force, neat and smart—because girls are girls all the world over. We discuss with them the chances of the winter; what private theatricals we shall have; where we shall get the best tobogganing; what sleighing parties we shall get up; and what dances. For we are fond of amusements in Clear Sky Land, and our favourite amusements are acting and dancing. Summer is work time, in winter we play. Then we have the glorious days of sharp, clear frost, with never a breeze, to stir the branches in the forest, day after day, week after week, bright, still, and cold; when, without, we warm ourselves with farm-work and wood-cutting, and within, the stove keeps all the house, day and night, snug and comfortable. It will soon be upon us, the winter; already the maples are brightening for one last effulgent burst of colour before they drop their leaves, and then the snow will come and the leaves will fall. Already the first detachment of lumberers from the Montmorenci Works are making their way north laughing and singing, carrying as they go the long-handled Canadian axe, talking their queer old seventeenth-century French, the tongue of La Fontaine, unmixed by any modern argot.

Towards the afternoon the stir and bustle grow quieter. The last prizes have been adjudged, the last animal has been walked round for inspection. There is already the beginning

of the homeward move; carts, buckboards, buggies, and all kinds of wonderful vehicles are brought out; horses are harnessed, and party after party driven away, until Dee Bank is left in its wonted solitude, and the half-dozen folk who live there always can begin to talk of the wonderful day they have had. North, east, south, and west, the people plunge into the long lanes of greenery, and disappear. Every opening where blackened stumps show a settlement takes one of the carriages off the rough and uneven road; presently they cease to pass, and the squirrel and the chipmonk begin again to run races along the silent path.

You will see no such gathering as this in the old country. These are the pioneers of a great future. Look on them with respect. These grey and grizzled men, with the steadfast eyes and grave faces, are those who have wrested the fruits of the earth from jealous nature, who wanted to keep all the place for her beautiful maples. This exhibition at Dee Bank, poor as it would seem at Islington, represents the result of fifteen years' toil. Remember that these men have inherited nothing and created everything. They came to the forest, axe in hand, to plant themselves among the tangled underwood, each in his place. They have cut down the trees; planted, sowed, reaped; cut down more trees; built houses, churches, and schools; made roads, and founded cities. These sacks of golden grain, these splendid fruits, this generous wealth of vegetables, and flowers, and garden growth—it is all absolutely the work of their own hands. There is something touching in the simple pride which such a settler feels in such work. He must be a real man who has made such a home for himself, where before him was only a home for the she-bear and her cubs.

The last to go are Stephen Burdacomb and John Pomeroy. Without speaking, the older man steps into his nephew's light American buggy.

"Coming home with me, uncle?" says John.

"Ay, lad," he replies slowly. Then he takes the straw out of his mouth, and, as if making a real plunge into action, throws it away. "She wrote to me," he began.

"Ay! my mother?"

"And she said that she hev a thing to say to you." Here he stopped, and thought much harder than ever he had thought before in all his life. It was an effort to find expression, not a struggle after facts. "It's been bore in upon me lately—last Sunday it was bore in upon me that—that massive, as you'd say it was a barrel of apples. In church, too. So when she said that she hev a thing to say to you, and when I knew what that thing must surely be, I said to my old woman—I up and said, after dinner on Sunday morning—'I stand by Mary throughout. If Mary tells the boy I must be there too for to stand by her. John Pomeroy,' I said—meanin' you, my lad, and no other—'he's a fine boy and well grown, and never said nor done other than what is right. But he don't know this, and when he does know it I must be there to stand by Mary. Blood,' I says to my old woman, 'is thicker than water. She's the only sister I've got, and I'm bound to stand by her.'"

John Pomeroy listened to this speech, which, what with the depth of the ruts and the height of the boulders, and occasional gaps in the corduroy road, was much interrupted; as the speaker, clutching to the back of the seat, was shaken and bumped about.

"Got a thing to say, uncle?" he replied calmly, for the announcement affected him but slightly. Young men like John Pomeroy are not always nervously expecting something bad to happen; and besides, he knew his uncle's ponderous manner of speech, and the solemn introduction of the subject did not at all alarm him.

"Got a thing to say, uncle? Very well, I shall be very glad to hear anything that you and my mother have got to tell me. I say, uncle, she will be real astonished at the aged bull's prize. Well, the place isn't Bow Park, that is quite certain; but if they've got finer cattle anywhere else—except Bow Park—than ours, I'd like to get up early in the morning and go and visit that place. Hallo! Hold up, uncle. I'll mend this road to-morrow. That was a deep one. Here we are."

A homestead in Clear Sky Land. A farmhouse and a farmyard. The house is built of wood, like many other Canadian houses, and it is painted white, with green jalousies. It is a house of two storeys, with high-pitched roof, which is more the fashion in the province of Quebec than in Ontario. There is a flower-garden and a kitchen-garden; there is a lawn in front, not quite so trim as a lawn would be in England; behind the garden is the forest; and on either side of the house stretch the acres that this stalwart young fellow, now unhitching his horse, has cleared of trees, save their stumps; has ploughed, sowed, and reaped, nearly all with his own hands.

A lady comes to the door at sound of the voices. Her hands are rough with work; her dress is homely; but her face has upon it the seal that belongs to a gentlewoman. Her brother, Stephen Burdacomb, is of the earth, a son of the soil; she, like him in face, is spiritualised, as one who has thoughts above the soil. She touches her son upon the arm, and looks up in his face with a little smile, as if contentment were upon her when she saw him come home again.

"Supper is ready, John. Come in, Stephen, come in both of you."

More beefsteaks and tomato sauce; more apple-pie; hot cakes and roll; more tea.

After supper, John Pomeroy made up the stove, gave his uncle a pipe, and sat down beside his mother.

"Now, mother, you've got something to tell me."

She began to tremble violently.

Quoth Stephen Burdacomb: "Me to stand by you always. Let the lad know."

"Four-and-twenty years ago," Mrs. Pomeroy began—"four-and-twenty long years ago, when you were only a month old, John dear, we sailed from Liverpool for this country—Stephen, and your aunt Esther, and their two daughters, and I, and you in my arms."

"Yes, mother, I know."

"We told the people in the boat, and we told the people

when we landed, that I was a widow. But I was not, my son—oh! I was not, and I am not now."

"What do you mean, mother?" The young man's face hardened a little, and she shrank for a moment.

"Easy, lad," said Stephen. "Let her say it out."

"We had quarrelled, my husband and I," she went on; "what we quarrelled about does not matter. I have tried, all these years, to persuade myself that it was my fault; but I cannot, John, I cannot. We quarrelled so badly that we separated—only for a time, I thought. But he came after me, a week later, and he said the most cruel, the most unfounded, the most wicked things." Here she broke down.

"Stand by your mother, boy," murmured Stephen.

"And I told him that nothing, nothing should ever bring me back to his roof again. I left him. I went home to Stephen. I heard nothing more from my husband, and six months later you were born. And then we came away. He never knew, he does not know now, that he has a son. He does not know that he has a wife living. He has lived alone ever since I left him, and I know not whether he repents, or whether he has hardened his heart."

John laid his hand upon hers.

"It is for your own sake, John, that I have told you the story. Tell me, my dear, that you believe in your mother's innocence."

"Elseways," said Stephen, "there is no good in having a mother, and you'd best ha' been born without."

John did not answer at first, but he pressed her hand.

"I must try as well," he said, after a pause, "to forgive my father."

"The time is come," she said, "when you must cross over and tell him. He has left the old place, and is living now in London, and he is reputed to be wealthy. In your own interests, you ought to see him."

"I do not want his money," said John hotly.

"And it is your duty, my son. I shall give you papers, sent to me six or seven years ago, which will establish in his

mind the fact that he was made a dupe, by a wicked man, of his own suspicions. You will give them to him when you tell him who you are."

John got up and walked about the room. They were all silent for a space. Then he said, as if his mind was made up—

"And how am I to introduce myself?"

"I have thought of that, John. You will go under an assumed name; you will take a letter to my old friend, Eli Ramsden, which will tell him exactly who you are. It is from him that I hear once or twice a year about my husband. He will talk to you, and you must make out a plan."

"When am I to go?" asked John.

"You ought to go at once—in a few days. You can be best spared during the winter, and you will come back to your mother in the spring, or as soon as you can. Promise me that, my son."

"Yes, mother, I promise."

She was silent for a while.

Then she began to talk to her brother.

"He will go and see the old farmhouse, Stephen; the dear old farmhouse at Moulsey Priors, with the sun-dial and the ivy; and the church where all the Burdacombs lie buried, and the river, and the orchards. O Stephen, Stephen! shall we ever, you and I, go over again to the old country?" Because, you see, even in Clear Sky Land, there are times when the memory of England flies to the heart, and drags the mind, as with ropes, to sweet and sad reminiscences of days gone by, which seem to have been, but were not, always happy.—"And I wonder what he is like now—after so many years—my poor husband."

That is happy, which is past. Poor Mrs. Pomeroy looked back upon the brief days of her wedded life, with an irascible, suspicious, and exacting husband, as if they had been lit up by a perpetual honeymoon. She tortured herself, sometimes, to find reasons for the cruel speech and the bitter insults which her husband heaped upon her head. Always, her heart was flying back to the man who had injured her; always, she regretted her flight and her silence; always, she

fancied that if she had remained, her husband would have softened, and she would have forgiven—oh! how readily—and all would have been happy.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT ST. SIMON APOSTLE.

GREAT ST. SIMON APOSTLE is not a church, though the name sounds like one; it is a court, and it stands behind Carmel Friars, in the very heart and centre of the city of London. Once there was a church, which, with its graveyard, occupied one whole side of the court. The population of the parish, which consisted of an acre and a half of ground, dwindled down by degrees to a dozen housekeepers, and the congregation of the church shrank in like proportion to a quarter of that number. Yet, when the old church was pulled down and offices built on the ground, there were not wanting those who mourned for its loss. They left a part of the churchyard—a little strip of garden-ground laid out in flower-beds, and rejoicing in two trees, which still hold forth branches of foliage green in spring, black in summer, and yellow in the early autumn. Stretching out these arms across the narrow court, they touch the dead wall on one side and reach very nearly across to the windows on the other. Beneath the large tree lies the last remaining of the old tombstones. As for the other monuments recording the birth, death, and virtues of so many burgesses and their wives, these were carted away into the wonderful land where all forgotten things go, so that the dead citizens whose headstones might have done to countless generations a perpetual service of admonition, became at one fell swoop utterly forgotten. In spite of their eminent Christian virtues, they are no more remembered in modern London than if they had been so many woad-stained early Britons.

The houses on the left hand of Great St. Simon Apostle are three in number; they are large and stately houses of

Queen Anne's time, built of brick, with flat façade, and without ornament. They have porches projecting over the doors, and the doors themselves are reached by stone steps. Inside, these houses—once the houses of substantial merchants—possess broad, deep staircases; their balustrades are rich with blackened carvings in oak, costly and precious. Now the houses are let out into offices. The only house on the right-hand side of the court, standing on the site of the church, is a newly-built set of offices, with polished granite pillars, and carvings in quite the newest style. Beyond these chambers is the churchyard, on the right of which is a great dead wall, the side of some vast warehouse; and across the end stands a house of three storeys of the Georgian period, decorated in the middle with a shield. The shield is carved with the coat-of-arms of a late lord mayor, deceased in this very house a hundred years ago. The house is Number Five, Great St. Simon Apostle.

The court opens upon a square or place, part of Carmel Friars, closely hemmed in and girt round by buildings. A church is there, an old church with a round tower in the corner of the west front; the houses have crowded against it, so that there is nothing left open but the nave. If you were to look in at the door you would find that even the nave is more than the thin congregation want, because they have bricked up the chancel and built themselves a comfortable little chapel inside, with varnished oak walls, within the church; for this is the church of the Dutch, and within these oaken walls there gather every Sunday, to hear the Word after their own fashion and in their own language, all that remain of the once flourishing and prosperous colony of Hollanders.

There are two or three narrow passages tunnelled under the houses, by which one gets in and out of this queer place; if you pass through one, you come to another square to which this passage is the only entrance. This is a square with four houses in it, one on each side. They are great stately palaces, where once merchant princes lived in ostentatious splendour. Now one of them is the headquarters of a small

City company, and the other three are let out in offices. If you go through another passage, or a third or a fourth, you find yourself in one of the noisy, crowded arteries of the City.

All day long and every day, except Sunday and Saturday afternoon, Great St. Simon Apostle and the square and Carmel Friars are echoing with a ceaseless throb of hurrying feet. No one looks about him—no one loiters; no one stops to talk and laugh; no one turns his face to right or to left. Church and court; churchyard and trees; old tombstones and flower-beds: these are things which everybody sees every day, and never sees at all. The mystery of the forgotten past which clothes an old city as with a sunlit cloud, for those who have eyes to see, is nothing to the men who have every day to fight for money. Their ancestors lived and died where they worked; the citizens of London knew each other, and were known to each other; the rewards of a laborious life and an unspotted record were the civic distinctions which their descendants abandon to retail tradesmen; they gathered together on Sundays in their City churches, where now the Ritualist plays at Popery and practises forbidden pranks to congregations gathered from the suburbs, or the mild old Evangelical drawls his well-thumbed sermon to an assemblage of half-a-dozen. The place is redolent of dead citizens; and if the ghosts of those old citizens could revisit the place where they lived, the living would have no room to stand among the dead.

But the living are too busy to think of their predecessors; only those who do not belong to the City can afford the luxurious emotions which arise from letting the thoughts flow backward up the stream of time. The clerks and the principals come at nine and ten, their thoughts intent on the things of the day. At five they go away, and then, as if by magic, these courts grow suddenly still. Quite still. Not a footfall; not the echo of a voice; not the banging of a door. The church itself cannot be more quiet than the court without; and save for a faint rumble of wheels which

falls softly on the ear in this sheltered spot, one might think oneself in a city of the dead, or a city at the early morning, or in a city of some theatre erected by the scene-painter, and waiting for a crowd of supers to play at the imaginary bustle of a crowded street.

All Sunday, too, save for the bells that bang and clash about the City, calling a people that are no longer there to hear, and except for the few minutes when the Dutchmen walk down the flags on their way to and from their service, the court and square are quite still and empty. If there be housekeepers in those great houses they are never seen; if the invisible housekeepers have friends they never come to see them; if a boy were to rush into one of these courts with a whoop his voice would drop before he got half-way through it, for the silence of the place would fall on him, and the hollow echoes taking up his cry would send it round and round from one wall to another, as if in every corner were nestled a mocking ghost of some boy dead and gone. But no boys ever do come, because in that part of the City there are no boys. To find them you must go to the other side of Bishopsgate Street, where are Houndsditch and the Marks and a swarming hive of humans.

The only thing to be seen about Great St. Simon Apostle during this time of calm and rest, was the figure of a girl. When the evenings were light, that is from April until the end of October, she used to glide out from Number Five, the house at the end, and pass along the little churchyard, when the last straggler was gone and the last office shut. Had they known—some of those rollicking young City blades—what a pearl of beauty lay hidden in the upper storey of Number Five, I think they would not have been in such a mighty hurry to huddle their papers in the safe, and be off and away to the West, where all manner of pleasures are found. Or, had they known how, on Sunday morning, this maiden might have been seen sitting on the benches in the church among the Dutchmen, herself fairer than the fairest tulip among that bulbous race, they too might have had heretical yearnings in the direction of the Dutch persuasion, and become

strangers for a time to their spick-and-span suburban church. The girl is Lettice Langton. She is rather taller than the average height of girls; she stoops a little as she walks, but that is from walking a great deal alone; her eyes are generally cast downwards. If those eyes were looking you full in the face, you would see that they are of a deep blue, full eyes, which are clear, but not too bright. And if she held her head upright, as she should, because she is as straight as a lance, and her figure is as perfect as Diana's, you would notice what a delicately-shaped head it is, and your eyes would fall upon a face which is marked especially by sweetness and purity. There are some girls' faces which bear that expression habitually, and never lose a certain haunting shadow of it, whatever their after life may be. But to bear it as a seal upon the forehead, the mark of an ever-present abiding spirit and influence, that girl's mind must be set habitually upon things high and noble.

It is a Saturday afternoon at the end of October, in the year 1876. Outside the City, the day is one of those bright autumnal days with a clear sky overhead, and a soft mist hanging upon the trees; when in the morning myriads of threads, dotted with pearls of dew, stretch along the hedges; when the last of the flowers are struggling against the season, the mignonette, sweet to the last, the chrysanthemum, and the aster; when the mind rests in the memory of the long summer, like an old man, placid and calm, in the evening of a good day's work. In the City it was nothing but a fine day.

On Saturday afternoon, and at half-past three o'clock, Great St Simon Apostle is perfectly deserted; not a footstep in the passages; not one upon the staircases; the front doors of Carmel Friars are all closed, the blinds down; no voice anywhere. Only the door of the Dutch church is open, because they are preparing for to-morrow's service; and as all the preparation necessary is conducted by an old woman brandishing a duster, the proceedings are not noisy.

Stay! a light footstep—the door of Number Five is open, and a girl is standing on the steps looking out. She is dressed

for outdoors, in hat and jacket—other girls would say that the former was old, and the latter a little out of fashion; also they would remark, that her dress is cheap, and her gloves worn and mended. Then they would turn up their noses, if they were common girls: if they were girls gifted with that good breeding which comes from the heart, they would pity her apparent poverty and admire her certain beauty. For, beside her pale, sweet face, with its regular features and delicate lines, her jacket fits her figure as if it had been made by the most fashionable Regent Street milliner—Lettice made it, in fact, herself—and the dress, which she also made herself, though it is of cheap material, is of soft texture, and of colour grateful to the most trained eye. She descends the stairs slowly; lingers along the iron rail of the little churchyard; looks up at the branches of the two trees where the yellow leaves are still hanging, expectant of the first frost, the first showers, the first cold winds to bring them down, and leave the black trees bare for another cold six months; and reads for the thousandth time the legend on the tomb—It is Sacred to the Memory of Meshach Squire, and it enumerates the benefactions of that citizen, the beautifyings of the church of Great St. Simon Apostle, the almshouses he established, and the Christian virtues of his life. Then she passed slowly down the court, and looked in at the Dutch church. The old woman dusting the seats saw the girl in the doorway, and nodded greeting. Then Lettice came out and passed hesitatingly along the roofed passage to the big street beyond. But that was full of passers-by, with noise of cabs, omnibuses, and carts, which jarred upon her nerves, and rather frightened her. It was a pity, because she had come out with a yearning for the quiet shades of St. Paul's, and a half-feeling that, perhaps, she might manage to get to Tower Hill, where she could see the river, and find a place of comparative silence for a Saturday afternoon. To-day she did not feel equal to facing the crowd, and crept back, with a sort of shudder, to the silence of the Friars. And after a moment's pause, she took the passage that leads to the four-housed square, and then, dropping into a

slower step, she began to walk meditatively round and round the flags.

Presently there strolls down one of the passages into the Friars a young man.

It is the same young man whom we saw two months ago in Clear Sky Land, the young fellow whom they called John Pomeroy, the tallest, strongest, and handsomest of the young fellows there—the man of twenty-four, who has the broad shoulders, the tall limbs, the clear hazel eyes, the deep chest, and the deep voice.

He glances up the court wistfully. Number Five is as silent as the rest of the houses. He looks into the church, but there is no one there except the old woman with the duster, and she is anxious to get finished and be off, because the shades are already gathering more thickly in the gloomy old church, and she remembers that it is a place of tombs, where every flagstone lies above a dead man. Ghosts in City churches are uncommon, but they are not unknown. Then the young man hesitates, in doubt whether he shall knock at the door of Number Five. Then he remembers the square. Slowly walking round the flags he finds the girl he came to look for.

She hears his step and lifts her head. See what a bright smile of welcome, like a ray of sunshine, lights her eyes as he lifts his hat and stands before her—lover-like, submissive. As yet he has said no word of love, and she has no thought except that here is a most noteworthy stranger, providentially dropped from the skies, to remove some of the dulness of her life.

"You said," he began, "you said—that is, I hoped—that you might be walking here to-day."

"I walk here every day," she said, rather sadly.

"Every day?" He looked round the narrow court with a sort of dismay. "Every day—in this prison of a place!"

Not an atom of respect, you see, for the memory of dead-and-gone rich men. "Prison of a place!" And this where only a hundred years ago three aldermen and one ex-lord

mayor—substantial merchants, not keepers of shops—lived all at the same time!

She laughed.

"I do not find it a prison; I find it a place where I get fresh air and exercise, and can think."

"Tell me," he said, in wonder, "do you never go outside these walls?"

"Oh yes; sometimes. To-day I thought I would go as far as St. Paul's, and walk up and down the South aisle——"

"Another prison," he groaned, having no feeling whatever for the venerable pile of Sir Christopher.

"But when I got to the end of the passage the crowd was so great and the men were jostling each other so, that I could not bear to think that I was going to make one of such a mob; and besides, the cabs were noisier than usual, and so I came back to my old favourite walk, where nobody ever comes to disturb me."

"Every day the same thing," he said.

She laughed.

"You mean my daily life. If you like I will tell you how my days are spent. We have breakfast at nine, Mr. Pomeroy and I. I suppose you think that late in Canada, Mr. Ashton?" It may as well be understood that Ashton was the name agreed upon with his mother by which John should call himself when he was introduced to his father.

"Well—yes," said John. "I hardly see how we should get along at all if we had no breakfast till nine."

"At two o'clock I send in his luncheon on a tray. At five o'clock I come down into the court, when all the footsteps have hurried away, and walk about here for exercise and fresh air."

"She calls this fresh air," murmured John compassionately.

"At six Mr. Pomeroy shuts up his office—it has been shut really since five, but he remains there at work till six—and we have dinner."

"And after dinner?"

"Well, you have seen what we do after dinner. When you are not with us, Mr. Pomeroy never speaks. He reads, sits by the fire, and looks in the coals. At half-past seven I give him a cup of tea; at ten he takes down his pipe and fills it; and then I leave him and go to my own room."

"And while he reads and looks in the fire—a pretty way of getting through the evening!"—had John's mother been present some reference would surely have been made to the Fifth Commandment—"looks in the fire, why can't he talk, or take you somewhere?"

"It has been always understood from the beginning that I was to leave Mr. Pomeroy to go on living as he had always lived, that I might do as I pleased, provided he was not disturbed. He gave me a piano, for instance, and as he told me I should not disturb him by playing, I play every evening. Sometimes I think that he listens."

"And does he actually never talk to you—never?"

"Before breakfast he says 'Good-morning;' in the evening he says 'Good-night.' Sometimes he will ask me at dinner if I want anything. When I tell him that I want nothing, and am grateful for his kindness, he says, 'Large deductions.'"

"What does he mean by that?"

"It is his way, you know. He pretends—because it can be nothing but pretence—to believe nobody. And in the same way he will now and then ask me how my brother Will is doing, and when I tell him that he is doing well, and is grateful for the start in life which Mr. Pomeroy gave him, he says, 'Hum! grateful. Large deductions'—meaning that poor Will is not so grateful as he pretends to be."

"And have you nobody—nobody at all—to talk to?"

"Nobody at all, Mr. Ashton; only the cook and the housemaid, and perhaps the old woman at the church."

"But that is a Dutch church. Do you go there?"

"Yes. It is close by, and one avoids the crowds and rush. Besides, though I do not understand Dutch, it is going to church, you see; and if you shut your eyes and

make believe, the language sounds very much like English. And then there are the hymns. They are sad hymns mostly, sung in unison, and they play the organ in chords, so that the music rolls about the roof and peals in gusts, like the wind on a winter night. I do not think I could go to any other church now. And then I look at the faces of the Dutchmen and wonder what they are thinking about, and if being a Dutchman is very different from being an Englishman."

This way of looking at things to the practical young farmer was new and incomprehensible; but it had a charm that he could not certainly have explained in words.

"You have not told me yet how you get through the day. Forgive me, Miss Langton, if I am inquisitive."

"Indeed there is nothing to forgive. There is the house to look after first——"

"That wouldn't take long."

"We have the whole of the upper part, you know, five rooms and two garrets, where the servants sleep. Mr. Pomeroy's office——"

"That is the front room on the first floor?"

"Yes—is left quite alone. No one ever ventures inside that room, and unless his office-boy cleans the room it certainly never gets dusted at all. And I am the housekeeper, and have two servants, a cook, and a maid. When I have gone into the accounts, paid all the bills, ordered dinner, and all the other little things, I am able to sit down and read; because, you see, I have all Mr. Pomeroy's library."

"But they are only serious books."

"Yes; he has no light reading at all. I should like, I confess, to read a novel sometimes——"

"I will bring you a hundred novels," cried John hotly

"Thank you, Mr. Ashton. If you will lend me one I should be very much obliged. At present I am reading Mill's Essay on Liberty."

"Oh!" said John, who had also read that work, and had a lively recollection of a tough week of weary work grappling

with it. "Always shut up in a room which looks on a dead wall; always taking exercise in a vault with the roof off," such was the disrespectful way he allowed himself to speak of this venerable square; "never a soul to speak to; never any society, and yet you are happy, Miss Langton? You are actually happy?"

"Yes," she replied, looking up in his face with her truthful eyes; "I suppose I am happy. Life is so smooth, for one thing, and when I came here first it seemed as if that compensated for all the solitude. We had a great misfortune just before we came; a great and terrible thing happened to us—to Will and to me."

"Will?"

"Yes. My brother. Of course. I see him every Sunday evening. Mr. Pomeroy always spends the whole of Sunday in his office; he comes to see me in the evening, and we have tea and music. Dear Will! You would like my brother Will, Mr. Ashton."

"I am sure I should," said John, "if he is in the least like—like the sister."

She did not blush. She was thinking of her brother, not of herself, and John's compliment passed unheeded.

"My brother Will," she murmured; "he is two years younger than I am. He is seventeen now. It is seven years since—since that dreadful misfortune happened to us, and of course it was worse for me than for him at the time, because I was the elder. I came here to live with Mr. Pomeroy, and Will was sent to school. In the holidays, Mr. Pomeroy, who does not like boys, put him in charge of one of the masters; and when he was sixteen, a year ago, he got him a place in a great house in the City, where they pay him forty pounds a year. It isn't much, but it is a beginning. And oh, Mr. Ashton, he is such a bright-faced, handsome boy, and his ways are so winning. Indeed, indeed you would like my brother Will."

John pondered this problem of maidenhood with an increasing wonder. She had no life of her own at all. She was effaced, buried, put away in a great coffin, this sweet

Sharon rose among damsels. No nun could lead a more secluded life. And not to have any one to talk to; sitting silent all the evening with a silent man! That she shrank from the jostling and noise of the streets he attributed to her inexperience, or even the superiority of her nature. I, who am much wiser, can tell you that her nervous shrinking from the streets and from noise was due to nothing but her long seclusion. It was the beginning of what might end in shrinking even from the silence of the court; in living wholly in those two rooms; in the gradual destruction of brain and will, the ruin, step by step, of what was destined to be a full and generous nature, receiving and giving.

"Let me take you somewhere," said John; "it is a fine afternoon. We have an hour of daylight before us. Will you come?"

She hesitated. Not considering whether it was proper or improper, because she was not troubled with conventional scruples, which never came in her way, but considering whether she was not afraid to go with him wherever he might take her. On the one hand, it was already half-past three, and the sun would set in an hour; also the streets were noisier than usual. On the other hand, there was this tall, strong young fellow to protect her.

"I will go with you," she said simply.

Outside John offered her his arm, and she took it, for the first time leaning on the protection of a man, so that the act seemed strange and even sacred to her.

"I am not going to drag you about the streets and make you tired," said John. "We will take a hansom and drive to the West End. Have you ever been to Regent Street?"

She shook her head. Already her nervousness was disappearing beneath the healthy stimulus of a great excitement. The crowd of people, the shops, some of them already lighted, roused her out of her apathy.

Presently they came to Regent Street, and John stopped the cab.

"Now we are going to walk," he said.

The walk from Piccadilly to Oxford Circus took them three-quarters of an hour. In the course of that walk John went into several shops. One was a glove-shop, where he purchased twelve pairs of the very best gloves and a glove-case—size of the glove six-and-a-quarter, which was the size of Lettice's hand, curiously enough. Also he bought two or three beautiful silk ties of a pattern approved and chosen by Lettice, delighted at being consulted. Next he went into a photographer's, where he succeeded in getting some large views of Canadian scenery, the subjects being selected by Lettice. After this he took her to a book-shop, and ordered certain books to be sent to an address which he wrote down and gave to the shopboy. They came next to a shop which had ladies' hats and bonnets in the window. A great many ladies, chiefly young and pretty, were gazing with eyes ablaze at the splendours of this shop. John went in and bought a hat and a bonnet, both of the newest pattern, which he told Lettice were for a young lady of her height, so that if she would try them on no doubt they would fit the other young lady. Lettice was so obliging as to do this. Then they went into a magnificent great shop, where John said he wanted to buy a lady's walking jacket and a dress made up. Lettice gave him her advice about this little matter too, and John paid for the things and left the address. Then he took her into a music-shop and purchased blindly twenty or thirty pieces which the man informed him were good. This parcel he carried away with him. And then he went into a jeweller's shop, and Lettice's eyes sparkled with delight. Oh! dreams of Golconda, what mines could hold more precious things than Lettice saw here? John bought a gold cross, and a gold chain, and a gold locket, and an emerald ring, which Lettice put on the third finger of her left hand, and it fitted beautifully. And then John called another cab, and they drove home again.

"Tell me," said John softly—he had been looking at the face beside him, as with animated eyes Lettice gazed at the birlliant street — "Tell me, how long is it since you left Great St. Simon Apostle and had a holiday?"

"Four years," said the girl. "Formerly I used to spend a month every year with my aunt at Moulsey Priors, in Essex, but she died, and since then I have been nowhere."

"Moulsey Priors!" It was the village where his mother had been born—which he was going to visit.

"You have been a prisoner for four years," he said. "Miss Langton, will you—will you trust me a little?"

"I think I trust you a great deal," she replied. "Have I not trusted you to give me a drive through all these wonderful things?"

"No, no; it is not that. But I cannot bear to think of your creeping round and round that ghostly square all alone."

"But if I am all alone and cannot help it?"

He was going to say something, but checked himself with the thought that the time was not come yet.

"Oh!" sighed the girl, "we are coming to the end of our drive. There is the Mansion House! What is the time, Mr. Ashton? A quarter to six! We have been out for nearly three hours. And now I have got my silent evening before me, and somehow I do not feel as if I care for Mill's Essay on Liberty any more to-day. Here we are at Carmel Friars!"

John walked into the court—it was dark now, and more ghostly than ever—with the girl.

"I cannot ask you to come in," she said; "but Mr. Pomeroy likes you to talk to him in the evening. He said so the other day. He said, when you went away, 'That is a sensible young man, Lettice; I like him. But then, Large deductions — Large deductions.' He meant that he was afraid of liking you too much, you know. Will you come again soon?"

"Will you drive out with me again soon?" he repeated. "This has been the most pleasant afternoon in all my life."

"Has it?" she replied in all innocence. "So it has of mine. Do you think we can have another drive soon, Mr. Ashton? But, to be sure, you will not want to buy all those

things again, will you? What a quantity of things you did buy, and what a lot of money you have spent!"

"There is a time to spend," said John, quoting Solomon, "and a time to save. I reckon this is a time to spend. Good-night, Miss Langton." He held her hand in his, for a longer time, and with a warmer pressure, than the mere leave-taking altogether warranted. "Good-night, Miss Langton. I forgot to say that—that in fact, I hoped that you would accept the little things I bought to-day——"

"Accept—I—Mr. Ashton? Oh! I cannot. All those things?"

John Pomeroy was a little staggered. But he remembered that he was a Canadian, and therefore could not show the white feather. So he returned to the charge.

"Why, Miss Langton, of course I bought them for you. In my country, if a young lady goes for a drive with us, we always buy something to mark the occasion. Why, when you play these pieces, you will think of the walk up Regent Street"—he placed the roll of music in her astonished hand—"and when you wear the gold cross and chain"—he deftly fastened the chain round her neck before she could prevent him—"you will think of our drive through the streets, and the pleasure it gave me. And the other things will all be here to-morrow. Of course," he added, "being a Canadian, I must follow the customs of the country. You forgive me?"

"O Mr. Ashton!" she said. "To buy all these things; and for me!"

He pressed her hand again, and was away.

I have never heard of that Canadian custom; but one can hardly imagine that John Pomeroy invented it for the occasion.

Her pulse bounded and leaped, the blood ran faster through her veins, her eyes sparkled with a delight she had never before even dreamed of; she would have liked to jump up and dance, in only thinking of this unexpected and wonderful drive. Sinbad the Sailor had never seen such sights—Aladdin never got such splendid presents. And

she had to sit still through the long dinner, and beat down her joy while Mr. Pomeroy sat over his wine, facing her, as silent as a sphinx, regardless of her joys or sorrows.

After dinner the girl played over her new music, which was bright and joyous, and struck some chords in the man's heart, which awoke unaccustomed thoughts in him; and at ten, when she rose to say "Good-night," he opened his mouth and spoke—

"What was that you were playing?"

"A new piece given me by Mr. Ashton to-day; he took me for a drive and bought it for me——"

"Ay! it seemed an old piece. A trick of memory, I suppose, which conjured up the shadows of the dead. Ashton, eh? Well, he is a practical man. He understands things. If money can be made in Canada, he will make it. Tell him, if you see him again—when you see him again," he corrected himself with a most unusual twinkle in his eye, "that I shall be glad to see him any evening at six—to dinner. I shall not send him any other invitation. Good-night, Lettice. She always professed to be grateful," he sneered. "Like all the rest—like all the rest! Ready to leave me for a lover! Gratitude! With her as with everybody else—Large deductions!"

Then he began to smoke, and smoked till the clock struck twelve, when he got up and went to bed.

In the morning the presents arrived. But among them Lettice failed to find the locket and the emerald ring; and she wondered for whom they were bought.

CHAPTER III.

LARGE DEDUCTIONS.

MR. POMEROY had been a resident, as well as the tenant of an office, in Great St. Simon Apostle for four-and-twenty years. He came to the place a man of thirty, and called himself generally an agent. That is to say, he was

ready to do any kind of business on commission. Mostly his business lay with farmers, for whom he negotiated leases and renewals, bought machinery, and sometimes sold stock. In the conduct of his affairs he was quick and entirely trustworthy. He sought for no mean or unfair advantage, and kept his word like the Bank of England. On the other hand, he was hard; if he had money to receive, those rents had to be paid on the day they were due. He had a large *clientèle*, but not one single friend; not one single man, for four-and-twenty years, had passed from the doors of his office to his private rooms. He was not a hermit, because he went in and out among men, sometimes dined in public places, was seen in places of resort, but he knew no one, and spoke to no one. And every evening he spent alone in his own room. He professed to despise and mistrust human nature; he looked on every one as a possible knave; he admitted no enthusiasms, and he allowed no disinterested grounds of any action, however simple. A disappointed and soured man; a man whose nature, always inclined to be suspicious, exacting, and irritable—an unhappy nature—had received some violent twist at one time or the other. If in the course of business a man was praised; if a measure was advocated; if a work was admired; if anything was advanced in his presence which tended to raise the credit of human nature, or the reputation of any man, country, or human institution, Mr. Pomeroy had one formula. On those occasions he would lay his hands upon hir knees, look his companion in the face, shake his head, and murmur, "Large deductions!"

At this time, his hair, which was short and curly, had gone quite white; it was a crisp, defiant kind of hair, which stood up in a thick crop, springing straight from his forehead. His eyes were bright and keen, but, perhaps, a little too close together. His features were strongly marked; his mouth firm, and his smooth-shaven chin square and long. Beggars, who are great observers and acute physiognomists, felt that it would be useless asking such a face as that for charity; people who go round to offices for benevolent or

religious societies, came downstairs from his at once, and without pressing their claims, when they heard his "No" in a deep and decided note; and children who ask the time, women who ask the way, crossing-sweepers who ply the broom, were all alike struck silent by the cold sternness of that face. Possibly there might be some tender spot somewhere in his heart, but no one yet had ever found it out.

Certainly neither Lettice nor Will Langton.

It was, as the girl told John Pomeroy, seven years since she had been brought to Great St. Simon Apostle. A dreadful thing had happened to the children. They lived in a certain market town in Essex, not far from the village of Moulsey Friors, the old house of the Burdacombs. Their father was the manager of the country branch of a great bank; their house was the upper part of the bank. One day the father went out after the closing of the bank, as was his custom, but on this day he did not return. The mother sat up all night, waiting in alarm for the husband who was to come home no more. And in the morning, they found him lying in a ditch by the wayside—dead. He had killed himself. The mother, weak and ill herself, at the time, died broken-hearted a week later. For there was more than suicide to face—there was disgrace. But this the orphans were partly spared, for Mr. Pomeroy came down from town and took them both away with him. Lettice he kept in his City house; the boy he sent to school.

"Understand," he said to Lettice, then a child of twelve, "that I am not to be disturbed. There is to be no talking and idle chatter. Amuse yourself as best you can. You shall have masters to teach you things, but do not talk to me or expect me to amuse you."

So the girl began the seven long silent years spent with this man, who never spoke to her except on matters of business.

For two years she and her brother went to spend a month at a certain farmhouse at Moulsey Priors, where her aunt lived; but the aunt died, and then there was nowhere to go to. When she was sixteen, Mr. Pomeroy asked her if she

wished to have any more teaching. She did not, she said; although that was hardly true, because she would have liked the lessons to continue for the sake of the masters' talk So then there was nobody at all to speak to. Will, too, was sent for two years' training in Germany, where he was to qualify himself for a foreign correspondence clerkship. Fancy the loneliness of the girl if you can! Try to understand the wild yearning that at times would come over her for somebody to come; for something to talk to; for some one to caress; for something to happen. No one, only an austere maid and an unsympathising cook, with, by way of an external friend, the old woman who dusted the pews and swept the floor of the Dutch church. No nun in any cloister could be more lonely, for nuns talk and work with each other; no prisoner in a cell could have been more lonely, for the prisoners have the chaplain to talk to. Long ago she would have sickened and died like a flower shut out from sun and air, but for one thing which saved her. When she was eighteen, which was about the end of the year 1874, her brother Will came home from Germany, his education finished, and was permitted to spend every Sunday evening —Mr. Pomeroy locked himself up in his office during the whole of Sunday—with her. Thenceforth the Sunday evenings were hours sacred to affection and talk. She thought beforehand what she would talk about, so as to get the most talk possible out of the few hours during which her brother was with her. She studied what to say and how to say it, so as to please him; she put on her best things to please him; more than that, she gave him three-fourths of her money to please him. She clothed him with all the virtues that a boy can possess. He was the handsomest and the noblest of young men; he was the best and most single-hearted of brothers. Who does not know the length to which a fond woman's heart may carry her? Who has not experienced in his own life something of that sweet deception? We look in the glass, and we see what we are. A woman looks at us, and who can tell what she sees?

For Will Langton, too young to be altogether bad, was in a bad way. He was inclined for the things which young City clerks do well to avoid. He was idle, and fond of pleasure. He was extravagant. He was weak of will, and easily influenced.

It was on an evening towards the middle of October that the quiet dulness of Lettice Langton's silent life was disturbed. She was playing some old music in that dreamy, spiritless way which was growing upon her, daily eating out the hope and vigour of her youth. Her very dreams were faint now—those dreams of a possible and glorious change—and there were moments when she trembled, thinking of the dull, dark days before, and the dull, dark days behind.

It was a cold, rainy evening; a fire was burning in the grate, by which sat Mr. Pomeroy in his habitual silence. He held a book in his hand, but he was not reading, and his eyes were fixed upon the red coals.

Then the clock struck eight—a dozen clocks striking together—Big Ben in the distance, St. Paul's nearer, and all the City churches chiming in—some a little late, so that it was five minutes past eight when every one was finished. The regular striking of the hours was also a part and parcel of the general stillness. When Robinson Crusoe felt the silence and solitude of his island most, the waves were rolling along the shore and the wind was clashing the boughs together, but these things only struck his ears without his hearing them.

So that when a quick and loud footstep echoed in the court, followed by a ringing at the door, both started.

"Who is that, Lettice?" asked Mr. Pomeroy. No single evening visitor had ever come to the place during the four-and-twenty years of his tenancy.

The maid brought up a letter.

"The gentleman is waiting down below, sir. I said that you saw no one in the evening, but he says he wants you very particular."

"Humph! Give me the letter." He broke the seal and looked at the signature.

"It is from old Eli Ramsden, the Quaker, of Moulsey Priors. What has he got to say to me?"

"DEAR FRIEND JOHN POMEROY,—The bearer of this note, John Ashton, has to confer with thee on practical questions. It is for thy great good that thee should see him at once, see him often, and learn to know him. This in truth, from thy friend, ELI RAMSDEN."

"For my great good! See him often! What does Ramsden mean? Jane, show the young man upstairs, into the office. No, here, and light us a fire. My great good! As if anything could happen to me now for my great good!"

Certainly a good deal might happen to the pale girl before him, who raised her quiet eyes in languid curiosity to see the stranger. Doubtless some uninteresting City person—one of those who rushed about all day with eager faces.

No; a young man who, whatever he was, could not be set down even at first sight as an uninteresting City man. A young man of quite a different style. A tall and brawny young fellow, with clear-cut features and steady eyes; and as he stood in the door, hat in hand, Lettice felt for a moment as if she had seen him before, somewhere—perhaps in a dream.

John Pomeroy the younger—it was he—saw before him a pale and very beautiful girl rising from a pianoforte, and at the fireside an elderly man, with hard, stern face and white hair standing up all over his head in short sturdy curls. The room was plainly furnished, having the girl's piano, a case of books, and a single easy-chair, in addition to the customary simple furniture of a sitting-room.

The young man felt a singular emotion. Before him was his own father, whose very existence he had never suspected until a few weeks before. His father! There was but little to be made out of surmises, but he felt, at

first sight, that here was a father capable of quite astonishing things in the way of hardness. That was immediately apparent.

"You are Mr. John Ashton?" asked the elder man, referring to his letter.

"I am—I am John Ashton," he replied, with a curious hesitation, as if he was not certain whether he might not be somebody else.

And again Lettice had the feeling of having seen him before. The very voice was familiar. It was deep and clear, like the voice of her guardian.

"My old friend"—here Mr. Pomeroy looked steadily at his visitor—"my old friend, Eli Ramsden, tells me that you wish to see me. How can I serve you? or, as we are men of business, and I like to call things by their proper names, how can we serve each other?"

"Let us call things by their proper names. You can serve me by teaching me."

"I am not a private tutor."

"And yet you can serve me by teaching me. You are, Mr. Ramsden tells me, better acquainted than any living man with agricultural work of all kinds in England."

"Eli Ramsden is a man of truth," said Mr. Pomeroy. "I should not have said that of myself. But since he says it you may accept it."

"I do accept it. I am a Canadian, sir, not by birth, because I was born in England, but went to Canada twenty-four years ago as an infant passenger, in the first steamer of the Allan Mail Line that ever crossed the Atlantic, so having passed twenty-four years out of twenty-five and two months in the country, I claim to call myself a Canadian born."

"You seem proud of it."

"I am proud of it, sir; we are going to be a great country some day."

"Ah! Large deductions!" murmured the elder.

"Well, we will talk about that another time. I am over here to learn all that can be known, all that can be taught me, to aid me on my farm in Canada."

"You have a farm? Of your own?"

"It is my mother's. I am her only son, and I am, therefore, in a sense, the owner."

"And you have brought over money? We do nothing here for love."

"I am in command of three thousand pounds, most of which I am to lay out to advantage in implements and stock, but part I may spend upon myself."

"To throw away in what you call amusements."

"No, sir. To throw away in education—in such things as one cannot get in the backwoods. That is my business in England. And Mr. Ramsden says you can help me."

"Ay. I am agent for more than one kind of business. Suppose I can help you?"

"Then we will make an arrangement. This is my proposition: I will come here three nights a week; you shall answer my questions—there will be plenty of them—and you will tell me what you know. There is plenty of knowledge in your brain if I can get it out. Think this over, and make a proposal as to terms. Just as well be talking to me as sitting over a fire."

Mr. Pomeroy was taken altogether aback. Here was a young man, whom he had never seen before, actually proposing to intrude himself for three nights in every week into his private rooms; to rob him of his twenty-five years' evening silence; to pump him for information; to bore him with questions. The impudence of the thing startled him.

"You say," he replied slowly, "that your name is John Ashton—John Ashton. I never knew any one of that name; and yet your eyes seem familiar to me. I knew a—a person with the same eyes once; quite the same eyes. I thought that person was in every way to be trusted. But there—the same dull old story—the usual deductions. Never trust to appearance, boy. Never believe in your neighbour. Fight for your own hand. Praise nobody. Trust nobody. Ask no trust of anybody. There, you have learned more wisdom from me in two minutes than you have learned all your life in Canada."

"Perhaps, sir," the younger replied, "that is a sort of wisdom which every man must have for himself. This young lady would not believe it as yet, at any rate. I am sure of that—any more than I believe it."

Lettice, who had been sitting on the music-stool listening, started.

"No," she said; "I cannot believe that there are no good people in the world. I have met with one, at least."

She looked at her guardian.

"Tush! nonsense, girl. What do you know?"

"Will you take me, Mr. Pomeroy?" urged the young man. "You shall call me your pupil, your apprentice, anything you please; only take me. Let me come here three nights a week for a month or two. You will find me an apt pupil and a ready learner; only you must let me come as a friend and an equal, else I am afraid my Canadian habits will surprise you."

"Why do you want to come so much?"

"Why? For fifty reasons. Listen a moment, sir. Canada is a poor country, because she has never had a fair chance of attracting capital. What is the best way of attracting capital?"

"That is a broad question."

"No, sir. I think it is a narrow one. It is—success. Now, I believe, we are going to succeed at last. We are going to become the great stock-farm for England. We have the lands, we have the railways, and we have the boats. As we grow in wealth, so we shall grow in greater esteem. I guess that is so, sir?"

He spoke with a very slight drawl, and the least touch of American twang.

Mr. Pomeroy considered a few moments. Then he looked up and said in a low voice, as if he had been fighting a battle with himself and been defeated—

"You may come. Begin to-morrow. Now, good-night."

"Thank you, sir, I will come. But I am coming as a friend, and so, please introduce me to that young lady."

"This young lady is my ward, Miss Lettice Langton."

The young man called John Ashton held out his hand. It was a very pretty delicate little hand that was put forth to meet his grasp.

"I hope we shall be very good friends, Miss Langton. I have no friends, yet, in London."

"Nor have I," she murmured.

Then he was gone. They listened, as he sprang down the steps four at a time; they heard him shut the door after him; they heard his footsteps in the court and down the narrow passage of Carmel Friars. Then everything was quiet again.

Lettice Langton looked at her guardian. He was staring straight before him, as if he had seen a ghost.

"I am a fool, Lettice," he said, in a tone quite unlike himself. "I am a fool to admit that boy to the house. What does Eli Ramsden mean by sending me a mad Canadian? All because his eyes made me think of some one else. Eyes, and mouth, and voice—gestures, too, all reminded me. Strange tricks memory plays! Good-night, Lettice."

In his hotel close by, the young fellow sat writing a letter to his mother.

"I have seen him," he wrote. "I have seen him, thanks to Mr. Ramsden's letter. He is grey-haired, but looks strong and vigorous. His manner is very cold, and he says that there is no one in the world to be trusted—of course I don't believe that. He said, too, that my eyes reminded him of 'a person'—that is what he said—'a person.' I acted entirely on Mr. Ramsden's advice. He is a stiff old Quaker, but he read all the letters, and when he had read them, he said dryly: 'Thy mother is a woman whom we may pity, friend John. I will think what thee must do.' And the next day he told me what I should do. Mr. Pomeroy, I am afraid to say my father, lest I should one day blurt it all out by accident—is the cleverest man in all England about agricultural things. The farmers go to him, and he buys instruments, gives advice, or sells advice, and acts for them. There is no one, says Eli Ramsden, like him; and if he were a different man, he would make himself better

known and acquire an immense reputation. But he lives locked up and has no friends. No one, said Eli Ramsden, has ever seen him in his private room, where he lives alone. So I was the first, I went in quite boldly, as if I expected to be received with open arms; and after a bit he gave way. He does not live alone, because there is a young lady with him, a Miss Lettice Something. Mother, I think I have lost my heart! I told you I would let you know whenever I did. Oh, such a pretty girl; such a quiet, sweet-looking girl! She did not speak till I spoke to her. But I made him introduce me, and I am to go as a friend. As a friend! If only he knew!

"London is a splendid place, when you get used to the crowd. To-day I went to——" Here followed a page of description which we omit, because most of our readers have seen the Tower, St. Paul's, the Monument, and the Docks. "And, my dear mother, I can't get that girl's face out of my mind. Do you really believe in love at first sight? And perhaps she belongs to some other fellow. Happy other fellow!"

Mr. Pomeroy, left alone, tried in vain to recover the usual tenor of his thoughts. Some chord had been struck which awakened recollections of the past.

"What is it?" he asked himself. "The lad's eyes, his mouth, his gestures—all remind me of her. Rubbish! I am put out, and nervous. She is dead—dead, long ago—long ago—dead and forgotten."

CHAPTER IV.

THE IDLE APPRENTICE.

THE most edifying of all Hogarth's celebrated series used to be, in my young days, a certain contrasted pair of pictures. In one was represented the industrious apprentice in church, looking almost too pious, and singing out of the same hymn-book with a pretty girl. Love, religion, duty,

the approbation of others, a proper sense of female beauty, and the applause of a good conscience, are all depicted in that fortunate young man's face. I could never, for my own part, divest myself of the feeling, that had it not been for the pretty, demure maiden, that young man might have followed the example of the other young man, who, as everybody knows, is depicted in the companion picture as playing heads and tails on a tombstone. He is all unconscious of the beadle, who is stealing on him from behind, cane in hand; and he is most unfortunately ignorant of the fact that his position is favourable for the administration of the most awful crack, that he is ever likely to receive in all his life. These two apprentices are for the moment represented by young John Pomeroy, the industrious, and Will Langton, the idle. The former, spending his evening in practical conversation, learning all that his tutor could teach, always in the society of the pretty maiden; the latter, unlucky Will, idling away the golden hours in billiard-rooms and music-halls. And on Sunday's, while the idle apprentice spends the forenoon smoking tobacco, only pulling himself together to visit his sister in the evening, the industrious young man might have been seen at the Dutch Church in Carmel Friars, singing out of the same hymn-book with the sweetest girl in all London. How excellent and how manifold are the rewards held out to those who do their duty! To be sure, John understood no word of Dutch, but he was in a church; before him stood the preacher, doubtless saying words good to hear; around him, within this narrow wainscoted fold, sat the honest Hollanders, listening devoutly; and beside him, her face touched with the glow of a dim autumnal ray shining through the windows, was Lettice Langton. It was new and strange for both of them. John's opportunities for flirting were few in the Canadian backwoods; such maidens as he met were—well—good and true girls as any the sun shines upon; but not like Lettice, not so sweet, not so delicate, not so dainty, not so altogether desirable and lovely. I fear that, while the voice of the preacher rang among the rafters, and echoed from the walls of the great

empty church, that industrious apprentice, like his predecessor, was thinking more of the face beside him, than the gospel that was being preached. When church was over, John walked with Lettice once or twice up and down the court, and left her to go home to her early and solitary dinner.

The evening lessons began. The young man took advantage of the permission to come as a friend in its fullest extent. He made as if he were an old friend; he pretended to be a confidential friend; he told Mr. Pomeroy the whole of his private affairs—except one thing—he asked his advice, as well as sought for information. So that, on the very first evening, Mr. Pomeroy found himself entrusted with the management, so to speak, of estates in Canada, belonging to a lady whom he had never heard of. Not only that, but he was managing them for nothing. Most men approached Mr. Pomeroy with that diffidence which belongs to a reputation for ability, wealth, and eccentricity. The young Canadian met him with neither diffidence nor timidity; he was, as is the custom in that free country, one man with another. Mr. Pomeroy, strange to say, liked it. What he liked more was the dash and pluck of the young fellow and his eminently practical mind. Perhaps what he liked as well was the change in his habits. He was roused out of himself. He actually began to talk to Lettice at breakfast and at dinner. He even seemed to take an interest in what she did; asked her, more than once, if she was not dull; and became, in a word, human.

"He is a practical young fellow," he said one morning. "That is what I like him for. None of your dreamy lot, who go to bed at night thinking that all the world are struggling who shall be first to help them. No, no; he means to help himself first—that is his line. Meantime he is young, and of course believes that people are not all envious of success, and chiefly anxious to throw stones at men going up the ladder. Wait till he is a little older."

The prospect of seeing John speedily become as great a misanthrope as himself put Mr. Pomeroy in good humour.

"I wish he would come every night," he said. "We are poor company with each other, Lettice. Why don't you talk to me sometimes?"

"You do not like being disturbed."

"Tut—tut. Every man likes conversation. I do not like prattle. Now Ashton talks well. Why don't you pay him a little more attention? Then he would come oftener perhaps."

"I, sir?" Lettice opened her eyes.

"He would like it, I am sure, if you gave him a little encouragement. Now, look here," the conspirator nodded his head and looked crafty. "Offer to play to him to-night—you play very well."

So that evening—the third—Lettice, timidly glancing at her guardian, asked John Ashton if he would like her to play a little.

"The very thing I was longing for," he said, springing to his feet and throwing open the piano. "The very thing; but I did not dare ask it."

That was the case with him. He dared anything with Mr. Pomeroy, but with the girl he was afraid. It is a healthy instinct which prompts a young man's knees to tremble, and his voice to sink, before the girl he loves. Knees strengthen as one gets older, and the divinity of women falls from the saddened eye of experience.

Lettice played for an hour. She played with expression and with skill. Alone all day, music was her principal solace, and her piano the friend to whom she confided all her thoughts. She played, and the young man sat beside her and listened.

"At home," he murmured in her ear, "at home we have choral societies and madrigal clubs—I belong to one—but there is no one among us who can play like you."

She blushed with pleasure. It was the first time any one had ever praised her. Good heavens! if people only knew the power of praise, and how it wins the love of men and women! Praise everybody, you who want popularity; but praise as if you mean what you say, not as though you are

sneering or envying, else people will hate you. Let every poet be a Milton, every woman a goddess, every artist a Raphael, every actor a Garrick, every newspaper-writer a Macaulay; then you will be greatly loved, and backbiters will have to operate on other people's backs—the backs of those who criticise and blame.

"Shall I sing for you?" asked the young man. "Or perhaps you will sing to me."

"No," she replied. "I have no voice. What will you sing?"

He looked about among her music and found a song which he knew. It was a simple Scotch song, and he sang very well and had a good bass voice.

"Ah!" said Mr. Pomeroy, "I used to sing once myself."

Lettice heard this with amazement. Mr. Pomeroy sing!

"Why did you give it up?" John asked bluntly.

"Because there came a time when I gave up a great many things in which I had formerly taken pleasure; because I learned to know the world. Was taught it in a single lesson. Most men learn it in a series of lessons."

At ten the music ceased, and Lettice left them alone.

"I always have a glass of brandy-and-water with my pipe. Will you join me?" asked Mr. Pomeroy in a burst of generosity, because hospitality was one of his disused virtues. We most of us have several disused virtues lying by, rusty for want of practice. Some day, when I have time, I mean to get all mine out, furbish and rub them up smart and clean, and go about brandishing them. Think of everybody's astonishment!

"Thank you," said John. "I never touch spirits or drink of any kind. And I do not smoke."

Mr. Pomeroy belonged to that old-fashioned school of thinkers who hold that wine, and especially port, should be consumed after dinner; beer, and especially bitter beer, with luncheon; and spirits, especially brandy, before going to bed, with two pipes. He clung to these habits, and it seemed flippant that so young a man should refuse to conform with them.

"Not drink anything—a teetotaller? And not smoke? Why do you affect these singularities?"

"Well, sir, they are not singularities at all. At least, I do not mean them as such. They are the customs of the country."

"Do you mean that no one in Canada drinks anything?"

"Not quite. Only that a large proportion among us, even in the towns, are temperance men, and that, in my part of the country, very few drink at all."

"Well!" said Mr. Pomeroy. "Large deductions, no doubt, large deductions."

It was on the Saturday after the first of those evenings that John took Lettice for her drive.

On the Sunday morning, when she came down the Friars at eleven o'clock, he was waiting for her in the porch of the church.

He saw that she had put on her new jacket and bonnet. She was not surprised to see him. "I thought you would be here," she said simply. "You can come to church with me; we are just in time."

After church he asked her to go for a walk with him, but she refused, on the ground of early dinner, and he was fain to let her go. After the door of Number Five shut upon her, how flat, stale, and dull the whole place seemed. And what a dismal place London became, London on Sundays.

As yet, he knew, there could be no question of love. She was not a girl who thought of love-making; she had, he was sure, no suspicion of love, no expression of the slightest flirtation; ignorant of everything, of the world, of the ways of men, of society, of her own sex, she accepted the suit and service of John Ashton as an unexpected delight, a thing to be taken with gratitude, but which had one great drawback, because he would soon go away and leave her alone again in a desolation which would be aggravated by the memory of past joys. Already, in a single week, she had learned to look forward with eagerness to his visit; already she was trying to think what she

would play that he would like; already she was remembering and treasuring up his words. Already her brother had the second place in her thoughts.

How was it, however, with the Idle Apprentice?

The boy was junior clerk in the great firm of Ferris and Halkett, with better chances than most of the juniors, because he knew French and German. The house paid him forty pounds a year for his services; Mr. Pomeroy allowed him an additional forty. On eighty pounds a year a boy of seventeen ought to be able to live; at least a great many do.

Young Langton, however, did not by any means manage to make his eighty pounds cover all expenses. Very far from it, and in the course of a short twelvemonth he not only got through all that sum, but also through thirty pounds which he had got from his sister. He acquired, besides, a gentlemanly manner of establishing a system of tick with tailors and shoemakers, so that he was not only the best-dressed among the juniors of Ferris and Halkett's, but none of his clothes were paid for. This advantage, which gave him so much more money to spend, enabled Will Langton to extend his knowledge of life by joining in its amusements, which he did chiefly under the introductory patronage of a brother-clerk, Ernst Kugel.

Kugel, a young man of two-and-twenty, a German by birth, had been long enough in this country to speak English perfectly. It was in England, indeed, that he acquired those habits and tastes which marked him out as occupying a position far beneath his merits. What was a hundred and twenty pounds a year to a youth who dreamed day and night of wealth, which, mind you, he would not hoard, economise, or lay out to any absurdly useful or beneficial enterprise, but would spend, and spend royally, upon himself?

Ernst Kugel hoped to arrive at this end, not by inheritance, which was absurd, nor by steady industry, which was equally absurd, but by short and easy methods. For one thing, he betted on horses. Whenever he had a pound to

spare, he laid it on some animal about whom he had previously received a tip of the straightest kind. This amusement, while it occasionally gave him a pocketful of money, kept him habitually in the direst depths of poverty and debt. Of course he took whatever credit he could get, and, of course, he abused that confidence and broke his faith. He was, in a word, one of the very worst specimens that London can show, of the clerk who is at once cad and snob, crafty and unscrupulous. He drank as much beer, or anything else, as he could get; he smoked as much tobacco as the office hours and those spent in sleep would permit; his views on all subjects were low and earthly, his opinions on all men were mean and base; he was the very worst companion that poor young Langton could have. And yet, because Langton was innocent, fond of amusements and frank, Kugel fixed upon him for his victim, and began to teach him all he knew himself.

Kugel was handsome, in a way. His German face was of a type common enough, but pleasant. He had long light-brown hair and bright blue eyes; he was rather above than below the middle height; he wore a moustache but no beard or whiskers; his face showed few signs of his debauched life, save for the twitching of the muscles; but his figure was already rather bloated, and his "condition" prematurely bad. His shoulders were round, and he stooped a little as he walked.

The fact is, that as Ernst Kugel should have been born rich, in order to give the world an awful example of how money should not be spent, so Will Langton should have been born rich, so as to show the world what a curse idleness may really be. He hated offices and office work; he detested the drudgery of quill-driving; he longed for the half-holiday to come again; he thought the noblest thing of all was to be born with no necessity for work. He had not, you see, read Rabelais, who would have taught him that necessity is the first great master of arts.

Once out of the hated office, both young men fill and light wooden pipes. It is not that young Langton wants to smoke

—in fact, he does not smoke except when he is with his friend; but there is a certain grandeur and independence in walking along the street, pipe in mouth.

"Where are we going to-night?" asked the boy.

"Well, we went to the Connaught Hall last night. I don't think we want two nights running of that entertainment, in spite of the ballet. Let us have a little pool. Have you got any money?"

"I've got ten shillings," says the boy.

"That will be more than we shall want," replied his mentor. "I'll show you how to divide the pool, my boy."

"I say, Kugel," Langton went on, with an anxious expression; "if Cassandra doesn't win——"

"Nonsense; she's bound to win. Didn't the trainer's own first cousin tell me there was nothing that could stand against her? Hasn't she gone up from twenty to one, when I got the tip, to six to one?"

"If she doesn't I'm cleared out," Will persisted with a half laugh.

"Never mind, go to your sister; she'll lend you more money."

Will shook his head.

"Poor Lettice! She's given me three-quarters of her allowance already. I can't get any more from her. And then they're dunning me about the things I got on tick."

"I know. Come, don't anticipate trouble. If Cassandra wins I pocket a cool hundred, and you, my boy, twenty. Make up your mind that she's going to win. Think of winning twenty pounds. And now, what are you going to have?"

They were in front of a coffee-house.

"I'm going to have a cup of coffee and a roll," said Langton.

"I'll wait for you, then. I'm going to have a gin and bitters. Then we'll find out the fellows and have our little pool."

An evening spent in a low, badly ventilated billiard-room, the first floor of a public-house: for companions, ten

or a dozen clerks of the same stamp as Ernst Kugel. Tobacco all the evening, with bad beer. Result of the entertainment: the loss of eight out of the ten shillings, slight improvement in skill at billiards, a headache, a shaking hand, and increased readiness to laugh at things evil and sneer at things good.

Surely Hogarth had this sort of thing in his mind when he presented the Idle Apprentice playing heads and tails on the tombstone, and behind him, as we know, the beadle!

CHAPTER V.

A DRAMATIC SITUATION.

IT was half-past three in the afternoon when young Langton stepped briskly out of the great warehouse of Ferris & Halkett, buttoning his coat across his chest. There was good reason that it should be buttoned tightly, because in the breast-pocket he had a bagful of notes and gold, which it was his duty to take to the bank; this tolerably important trust being, as every one knows to be the custom in our mercantile houses, confided to the youngest, and therefore, the least trustworthy clerks. In his own desk was a book in which were entered the numbers of the notes and the amount in gold. The bank was in Lombard Street, the warehouse of Ferris & Halkett in one of the narrow streets which lie between Cheapside and the new thoroughfare of Queen Victoria Street. There was thus a short walk of ten minutes between the office and the bank.

Will Langton did not look happy on this October afternoon. Like many an older, and consequently worse man, was he in debt, and being dunned for money which he had not; like many an older and more foolish man, he had been living in a fool's paradise. That Cassandra should win the Cambridgeshire Stakes; Cassandra, Kugel's straightest and most trustworthy tip; Cassandra, on whom, by Kugel's

advice, he had laid, when the odds were twenty to one, the last sovereign that was left of Mr. Pomeroy's allowance and his sister's gifts; Cassandra, who had been rising steadily day after day till she stood at six to one, and backers were plenty at the price—had been to him for the last three weeks a "moral;" nor did it come home to him until that day, the very day of the race, that there was just a chance for Cassandra to come in somewhere after the first. And all day long he had been trying to realise his position, in case of that disaster actually happening.

Of course, that disaster was bound to happen. Did any one ever hear of a single case where a bankrupt man rested his hopes upon a prize in a lottery, the winning of a horse, the accidental determination of a chance in his favour, and of that lucky chance turning up? It is certainly open to say, that no sane man would so ground his hopes; it is also open to say, that the line between sanity and insanity is a good deal confused, and also, if that goes for anything, that there is much humanity in man.

Will Langton was that bankrupt and that fool. The winning of that one horse seemed to him the one thing which stood between him and a most awful scrape. Let us not be too hard upon him; first, because he was very young, only seventeen years of age; and secondly, because he is the only brother of Lettice.

Will had been brooding all day long over the state of things. To a seasoned vessel, the mere fact of owing more than one can pay, of receiving letters which dun for money and remind one of broken promises, of meeting tradesmen who make unpleasant remarks about gentlemen's words of honour, and so forth, have no annoying or worrying effect at all. Quite the reverse. If it were not for the little excitement caused by their letters, rencontres, and remarks given them, and the opportunities which they offer to conversation, many gentlemen would be hipped in their daily life, and at a loss for their daily toil. When you are young, it is different. To a boy of seventeen, a debt of five pounds is a bugbear; a letter from a disappointed creditor

is humiliating, and a threat of legal proceedings maddens; we get used to such things as we grow older.

By this time the race was run, and his fate—for every thing at seventeen is full of fate—was decided. He looked up and down the streets for an *Echo* boy—none was in sight. But as he walked quickly in the direction of Lombard Street, steps came running after him, and a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

It was his German friend, and at the sight of his gloomy face, Will knew that the race was lost.

"She must have been got at," groaned Kugel. "Nowhere at all—not in it—not even placed. Oh, if we could only find out how it was done! A hundred pounds lost—cheated out of a hundred pounds."

Will felt sick and faint.

"Cheer up, young 'un," said his adviser, "the game isn't over yet, though we have lost this time. What's a sovereign, after all? That's all you've really lost, though you feel as if it was more. It's worse for me—I feel as if I had lost a hundred. I thought that hundred was certain."

"It can't be worse for you than for me. I made sure of that twenty, and I've got no money, and I shan't have any, except the weekly pay—fifteen shillings every Saturday—for three months more. How am I to pay up? And he threatens to go to Mr. Pomeroy and tell him what sort of a life I've been leading."

"What if he does?"

"You don't know Mr. Pomeroy. If he were to find out that I go about with—with——"

"With me?"

"Yes, with you and your set—I should hear the last of my allowance. And poor Lettice——Kugel, you must help me out of the scrape."

"It's deuced unlucky for both of us. As for me, my landlady doesn't know where my office is, and I don't mean to let her know. I owe for three weeks now—rent, and coals, and breakfast. Promised to pay up on Saturday. I rather think, Langton, my boy, that when she sends up her bill on

Saturday morning, she will find the bird flown. How much do you really want?"

"The bill is fifteen pounds, five shillings, and sixpence."

"Phew! You must ask for time. It's your only chance."

Just then the City clocks struck four. Will started.

"Four o'clock! And now I can't pay in."

"Were you going to the bank? Well, that does not matter. You can take it back for to-night."

It did not greatly matter; only when Will went to give back his bag, the clerk, who should have received it, was busy. And when he tried again at five, the clerk was gone. So that, when he left the office a few minutes later, he had with him still the bagful of notes and gold.

"You can slip out to-morrow at ten and pay it in first thing," said Kugel.

"It is ridiculous," said that worthy, presently, over a glass of gin and bitters; "it is ridiculous to make a fuss over debts. If you can't pay them, say so, and let them do what they like. A gentleman wants all the coin he can get for his amusements. Hang debts!"

Certainly Will Langton was in the way of becoming the first gentleman in Europe, for he had spent during the last twelve months every farthing in his amusements, if we count his daily shilling dinner as an amusement, and I do not know what else it was.

"But if he goes to Mr. Pomeroy, and lets out about things——"

"There will be a row, that's all. He will blow up and pay up, and you will go on the same as before. Come, Langton, have a glass of something."

Will shook his head. Then he hesitated. There was still a shilling in his pocket—enough for next day's dinner.

"Devil take to-morrow," said his friend.

Then Will Langton took something; and then they both smoked a pipe and took something more.

At eight the boy's cheeks were flushed and his speech a little thick. Kugel had been paying for a good deal more.

"How much money have you got in your pocket?" asked Kugel.

"Two hundred in notes, eighty-five in gold."

"Eighty-five in gold," mused the elder clerk. And the notes—I suppose they"—he pointed over his shoulder to an imaginary office—"they know the numbers?"

"I took them down. They are in my desk."

"Ah! in your desk. Well, old man, take care not lose that bag. Eighty-five pounds. Eight—y—five—pounds! What a flutter we could have, you and I together, if we had that money to spend. Pay our bills and all. Start us fair again. It would be a good joke, wouldn't it? to pretend that you had lost the bag, wouldn't it? Let us see: you might say that it had been pulled out of your hand as you walked along, eh? You were afraid, you know, to tell them till the morning. I wonder how that would wash?"

He leaned forward to whisper this evil suggestion.

"Tell them I lost it?" asked Will. "But I haven't lost it!"

Which was quite true, because it was in his pocket.

Kugel, a seasoned vessel, who drank beer like water, and was as sober as when they began, forebore to pursue the subject, and taking the boy by the arm, he led him away.

It was half-past eight: the cold air of the October evening partially restored the lad. The rest of that evening—how an hour in a music-hall with more beer and pipes and bad air, led naturally to an hour or two in a billiard-room with more beer, more pipes, and worse air; how Will went through the various stages of heavy, sullen defiance of his destiny—you cannot possibly get light-hearted defiance out of adulterated beer—of maudlin cheerfulness, of dull stupidity, and of final complete and prostrate intoxication—may be passed over. When he arrived at the last stage his friend Kugel, who was still perfectly sober, and had been dividing all the pools, put him into a cab, and drove him to his own lodgings.

These consisted of a single room—the ground-floor back

of a house in Soho, let off entirely to lodgers such as Mr. Kugel, who, for economical reasons, preferred one room to two. A young Frenchman, who spent his whole days in the reading-room of the British Museum, had the front room on the ground-floor. In the first-floor front was a lady who had seen better days. She lived by painting photographs. In the back lived an elderly man, who was a dresser of shop-windows. His work was over very early in the day, and in the afternoon he used to go out and admire the effects, not above taking a wrinkle from the production of other artists in the same line. An ephemeral form of art, it is true, but, after all, in the eyes of the true artist, what does it matter for how short a time he labours? On the second-floor were an assistant hairdresser and his wife, a pair of love-birds cooing in one cage; and at the back two young ladies of the stage, who clubbed their slender resources and lived in the same room.

Kugel, with the help of the cabman, carried the boy into his room and laid him on the bed. By this time poor Will Langton was quite gone. His eyes were open and he rolled about his head, but he could no longer speak.

Now the two rooms on the ground-floor had, in their earlier and more honourable days, been connected by folding doors, which were now permanently closed and locked, so as to ensure the privacy of either occupant. It so happened that the tenant of the front room, feeling himself unable to sleep that night, was sitting up in bed smoking a pipe and reading—a most dangerous practice, which one would like to see entirely confined to foreign climes. At eleven o'clock he was startled by the most unusual fact of a cab driving up to the house. Who in that place could afford to drive in cabs? Not the lady who painted photographs; not the shop-dresser; not the two young ladies of the stage. The cab certainly stopped at the door, and immediately afterwards the listener heard heavy steps in the passage, as if two men were carrying something heavy, which finally found its way to the room behind. Then one man went away, the door was shut, and the cab

drove off. And then he heard a voice—that of his fellow-tenant—in low tones, and speaking to some one else in a tone of remonstrance. This excited his curiosity and his wonder. Here was sleeplessness, for once, rewarded. He slipped out of bed, put out his candle, and applied his eye to the keyhole, gathering a blanket over his shoulders for warmth.

As he smoked in bed, he had been building in a not too fertile brain that Château de France, in which the dreamer becomes—not a hero of romance, not a Monte Christo of wealth, not a Victor Hugo of fiction, but — a successful dramatist. To be a dramatist is the dream of every young Frenchman of literary tastes; to hang about theatres and try to discover the secret of success, the elixir of immortality, is his nightly amusement. Young Henri de Rosnay—whose real name was Goudon—was one of these dreamers. He admired and envied Sardou beyond all men; to write such plays; to win such applause; to enjoy, in his own lifetime, such glory, was, to him, a thing beyond all posthumous glory, all renown among posterity. "What has posterity done for me," Henri de Rosnay might have said, "that I should try to please posterity? Rather let me stand upon the boards, when the author is called, and receive the plaudits of living men and women."

To-night his thoughts had been particularly turned in the direction of stage ambition. He lacked, he felt the power of conceiving strong situations, but he thought he could fit a situation with dialogue, if only that situation could be found.

Might not this be a situation? Midnight: two men secretly—he made sure it was secretly—bearing a burden into the room behind his own! that burden a human being! Man or woman?

So he stepped out of bed, threw the blanket over his shoulders, and peeped—what will not man do, incited by natural ambition?—through the keyhole.

Then that young Frenchman saw some very strange and curious things.

First, the tenant of the room was not alone; it was, then, a human burden. With him was quite a young man, lying on the bed, with flushed cheeks and half-closed eyes, breathing heavily. A very handsome boy, with delicate features and curly brown hair. But he was drunk, that was certain. What had the other brought him there for? Henri de Rosnay thought of strange stories which he had read of Paris, Cairo, Naples, and Rome, and began to rub his hands with delight. Behold, here were materials for a sweet situation: boy drugged; brought home insensible to be—murdered, perhaps; robbed, perhaps; and he there, the unseen witness. As good as any play. As good as anything he could think of, although not entirely original, in the whole melodrama of Paris.

The first thing his fellow-lodger did was not altogether in accordance with melodramatic tradition; it was to pour into a tumbler some compound, which might, he thought, be another drug. As a matter of fact, it was gin and water; a mixture, which if taken on top of a plentiful cascade of beer, is more certain than any known combination of spirits and water to stupefy persons already partially intoxicated. He lifted the boy's head and put the glass to his lips. Young Langton had just strength enough left to drink off the contents. Then his head rolled round; his eyes closed; he fell into the deep sleep of drunkenness, absolute and complete. If his sister had only seen him!

The Frenchman saw them. Next, the lad thus forced, so to speak, into a profound slumber, the respectable Ernst Kugel—whose name, however, he did not know—sat down and began to think, looking at the sleeper. After a little he drew out a penknife and opened it slowly, still gazing at his victim. Was he, then, going to murder the boy? Henri de Rosnay drew a long breath, and began to consider.

This was a very delicate and difficult juncture. To shout and run into the other room might prevent the murder, and so spoil a dramatic situation. To stay where he was and look on might produce a splendid tableau, and yet allow a bloodthirsty murder. Henri de Rosnay was a kindhearted

young fellow, though his love of art might seem to override his dislike to manslaughter, and it must be owned that for a moment he wavered.

Happily he was spared the necessity of the choice. Ernst Kugel, it appeared, had no design whatever of murdering the boy. All he did with the knife was to cut, not his victim's throat, but his coat-buttons; not to stick the murderous weapon into his windpipe, but to gash and cut the buttonholes. What did he do that for?

Then M. de Rosnay observed that the boy's coat was tightly buttoned across the chest; so that the buttons cut off and the buttonholes gashed, the coat would have the appearance of having been cut open by violence. Then he chuckled to himself.

And he was not at all surprised after this, when the respectable Kugel put his hand into the inside pocket and drew it out with a bag—a bag of coarse sacking, which M. de Rosnay's slight experience told him was made to carry money backwards and forwards between an office and a bank.

There was a table at the foot of the bed, also very fortunately commanded by the keyhole, on which the robber, if he was one, quietly poured out the contents of the bag. There was a small bolster of notes and a quantity of gold. The Frenchman saw the man separate the gold into little piles of ten pounds each. There were eight of them and one smaller pile. Then he saw him tie up the gold tightly in a handkerchief, so that it made a small and tight rouleau. The notes he folded and put in an envelope. He looked about him next, as if for a hiding-place. Beside the fireplace, after lifting the carpet, he found a loose plank—no doubt he knew of it before—one of those planks which are taken up when anything goes wrong with the gas. This he took up, and in the space below it he deposited his stolen goods. The Frenchman rubbed his hands—he saw his way to a really effective situation.

All this took time, but at last it was done, and the operater began leisurely to undress. The Frenchman saw

that he covered the boy over with a blanket, without removing any of his clothes. In a few minutes M. Kugel was ready for bed, and, in fact, went there as quietly and naturally as if he had been doing a noble and honourable action.

When the man at the keyhole saw the candle put out, he removed his eye—which was, in fact, of no further use in that position, and then, perplexed, but much elated, he went to bed too.

In the morning he was awakened by voices in the next room, and instantly springing from his bed resumed his old position.

"Aha!" he said. "Now for the next act."

Kugel was dressed, and the boy was sitting on the edge of the bed awake and looking dazed.

"It's a terrible thing," said the former. "I don't see any way out of it at all. You would leave us last night; nothing would keep you. I thought you were sober enough to get home, and when I came out a quarter of an hour later, there you were on a kerb-stone, sound asleep, with your coat open, like that. So I just brought you home as you were."

Will Langton groaned. As yet he could only half understand. Then he pressed his hands to his head.

"I can't remember anything about last night at all," he said. "And my head is splitting."

"Poor old boy! Never mind. I'll stand by you—to the last I will. Look here, Langton. They won't believe at the office that you were robbed of that money—nobody would be such a fool as to believe that."

"Won't believe that I was robbed?"

"Most certainly not. There was a similar case last year of a fellow pretending to lose money. They charged him with it, and he was tried and found guilty. Five years he got."

Mr. Kugel forgot to mention that the two cases were not exactly similar, because in the former case it was clearly proved that the clerk had not lost the money at all, but had made use of it.

Will fell back on the pillow and buried his face in his hands.

"No, what you've got to do is this. I will go to the office and say nothing about you. You will stay here till I come home. The landlady shall bring you up some breakfast at twelve. You go to sleep again now. At four or five you shall have a chop; and you take good care not to stir from here till I come home again. And that may be latish. Don't sit up for me, but go to bed when you are sleepy. There's plenty of gin in the bottle, and there's the tobacco. And so now, old man, you stay here and be comfortable. Perhaps things will blow over, you know, after a bit; and then you can come out and look round again."

Langton acceded. He was so miserable, so ill, that he would have acceded to anything; and at the moment it seemed as if sleep was the one thing which he wanted. The misery before him, bluntly put by his adviser, fell with a dull pain upon his racking head, but he was too ill to understand. Lying down again, he fell asleep in a few moments.

Kugel covered him with a blanket, went out, gave some directions to the landlady, and left the house.

M. de Rosnay, still watching the case with a lively interest, hastily pulled on his boots, snatched his hat, and stole out after him, following on the other side of the street.

Through the streets of Soho to Holborn, along the stately Holborn to Newgate, from Newgate to Cheapside; then, turning down one of the narrow southern streets, the office of Ferris & Halkett. There the prey was run down; the sleuth-hound watched him enter, and then, going boldly straight in after him, called a porter standing at the gate, and asked him the name of that gentleman, pointing to the clerk.

"That is one of our German gentlemen," said the man; "Mr. Kugel his name is."

"Kugel! Ah, I was wrong. Pardon," said the Frenchman, with a strong foreign accent.

He had learned what he wanted to know—the name of this man of mysterious habits, and the place where he was employed. He retraced his steps slowly, thinking. The robber was a clerk in a City house, that was ascertained. Good; he could run him down whenever he pleased. Next for the boy.

This time he did not use the friendly keyhole, but boldly opened the enemy's door and looked in. The lad was still, as he expected, sound asleep—heavily asleep; so steeped in slumber that he did not awake when the Frenchman put his hand into his coat-pocket and drew forth a letter, the creditor's missive, and read the name.

"Aha! Mr. William Lang-ton, Messrs. Ferris & Halkett. It becomes complicated, this affair. Situation. Two clerks in one bureau. Good. Ze young clerk gets dronk, ze more older clerk he r-r-rob him." He threw up his forefinger with a gesture of explanation mingled with disgust. "Tiens, tiens—what next? Next he hides ze money. Where? Sous le plancher—in ze ground. Bien, bien."

He went on his hands and knees and began to examine the planks beneath the window. It was quite easy to throw back the carpet and find the loose one; and beneath it, there lay the rouleau of gold and the packet of notes.

"What to do?" he asked himself. "What to do? If I leave the packet, he will perhaps come home and take the money and go. If I take the packet, one might suspect me—Bah! that is impossible—suspect Henri de Rosnay? That is foolish, that is absurd; I will take the money, I will watch for to-day and to-morrow. Aha! to-morrow, I will go to his office and denounce the true robber. End of act three, with fifth grand tableau."

He placed Will's letter and the packet in his own pocket and left the room, the boy still breathing the heavy sleep of intoxication.

It was pretty certain that his victim would not return till the evening—late he had told the boy—M. de Rosnay, therefore, proceeded with his own business. First he went

to the British Museum, where he wrote part of his letter to his Parisian paper. In it he threw out hints about being engaged in tracking to its end a dark and mysterious affair, which, in the hands of one less skilled in the tortuous workings of the human heart, would infallibly, he said, be a work attended with failure. "Let my readers of the fair sex," he added, "be reassured, this country is not Persia, nor is it France. It is money, not love; robbery, not jealousy; which lies below the plot of which I speak. And yet I promise for all a new, an original, a piquant story."

He went home at seven, for safety. No one was in the back room but the unlucky boy, sitting with his head in his hand, a picture which would have moved the heart of the youthful Lacedæmonian far more effectively than a more common Helot. But no one else.

It was weary work, passing that long evening waiting for a man who did not arrive. But what would deter a French correspondent in the pursuit of something exciting? At eleven he got tired, however, and went to bed, with the resolution of waking up when he heard steps in the next room.

It was past two when the steps did awaken him. But there was nothing to see, because Mr. Kugel on getting home proceeded straight to bed.

CHAPTER VI.

IS IT A DREAM?

IT was not till twelve o'clock the next day that Langton's non-appearance began to excite remark. An hour later it was discovered that the money with which he had been entrusted was not paid into the bank. This was serious. A messenger was sent to his lodgings, for Langton was not, as his friend Kugel, one of those who love to bury their heads, ostrich-like, in obscure places. The messenger re-

turned with the intelligence that he had not been home all night. Then a consultation was held, and the chief, Mr. Halkett, was informed.

Mr. Halkett was a man who did things on principle. He paid his clerks an ascending and regular scale of salary, which was not too much when you got to the top of it; he granted a fixed holiday of three weeks to everybody, and made them take it, just as some banks do, with the view of finding out any irregularities; he would have none but Churchmen in his employment, and was particular about the morals of his young men; finally, if any one went wrong, he knew, without being told, that prosecution awaited him.

Mr. Halkett wrote a letter at once to Mr. Pomeroy, by whom the boy had been brought to him.

That was why, about three o'clock in the afternoon, young John Ashton, going out of his hotel, met, as she was coming in search of him, Lettice Langton, pale, trembling, and agitated.

"O Mr. Ashton!" she cried, taking his hand, "if you cannot help me, no one can."

"If I can help you——" he began; but she interrupted him.

"My brother Will——" and then broke down.

"Come into the ladies' coffee-room, and tell me all you can."

There was no one in the ladies' room, and Lettice took a little courage from the sympathising silence of the mute furniture, to tell her story.

At half-past two a messenger came from Ferris and Halkett's to Mr. Pomeroy, asking if he could say where young Langton could be found, because he had disappeared and three hundred pounds with him. Mr. Pomeroy did not know; said he was busy; said that the boy's sister might know—handed the message over to her. Then the messenger told her the dreadful news.

That was the terrible story which Lettice poured into the

ear of John Ashton. Could he find the boy—somewhere in this great London?

"It is a tough contract," said John Ashton to himself, thinking whether Sir Galahad, Perseus, Hercules, Œdipus, and a few other performers of mighty deeds, ever had a more difficult task before them. But at sight of the tearful face before him he resolved to do what he could to hunt up this boy, to trace him—if any trace of him could be found—step by step, innocent or guilty, until he could give him back to his sister, to be rejoiced over or wept over.

"Poor—poor Will!" cried Lettice. "O Mr. Ashton! try to think that my brother is not—is not really bad! He cannot—oh, he cannot—have taken the money wilfully. Some accident may have happened; he may have lost it; he may——oh, I do not know what to think."

"Try not to think at all, Miss Langton," said John. "Let me think for you. Now, may I begin?"

"Yes, if you please."

"London is a big place, full of temptation. Your brother is only seventeen years of age; he lives in lodgings—all alone—at seventeen. There is no place for him to go in the evening; he may have got into bad company. You must not think too hardly of a boy left all alone. Let us try, first, to ascertain in what company he has been lately. Tell me, Miss Langton, have you any reason for believing that your brother was not—not quite steady?"

She hesitated, reddening.

"I should have said, yesterday—nothing. But now, I remember little things. He was always without money. He only had forty pounds a year, but Mr. Pomeroy doubled that for him, and—and—and—he had all my money too."

"All your money?"

"Very nearly all. Mr. Pomeroy gives me forty pounds a year for my dress, and poor Will borrowed, last year, nearly all that."

"Humph! That makes a hundred and twenty. What did he pay for his lodgings?"

"He had a single room, with the use of a sitting room, for five shillings a week."

"I see," John went through a little calculation. "Five shillings a week for lodgings; two shillings for breakfast; seven shillings for dinner; half-a-crown for tea and supper; a couple of shillings for washing; eighteenpence for sundries —that makes only fifty-two pounds a year. What do you think he did with the rest?"

"He had to dress himself."

"Very well, fifteen pounds—sixty-seven pounds—leaving fifty-three pounds. What did he do with that fifty-three pounds—more than a pound a week?"

Lettice hung her head.

"Indeed," she said, "I am afraid he spent it all on amusements."

John Ashton was silent. There was, indeed, nothing to say. To this young backwoodsman, who spent nothing at all a year in drink, tobacco, or amusements, unless shooting is an amusement, the thought of a boy of seventeen, throwing away a pound a week in mere pleasures, with nothing afterwards to show for it, was simply dreadful, wild extravagance. He could hardly understand how such a lad could exist.

"First," he said, "I must go to Ferris & Halkett's. That is, Miss Langton, when I have taken you home, if you please. Perhaps, the boy may himself come round to see you. So be in the way; and I will do nothing else at all, until we have found him, somehow or somewhere."

Lettice went away, strengthened with the thought that she was not left alone, and that some one was working for her and her brother. The dreadful thought that her brother might be guilty lost half its terrors—even though Mr. Pomeroy accepted the probability as a certainty—when her Canadian ally put her doubts into words, and showed her that many things might have happened besides—the ugly word which she did not dare to face. And, after all, Will had never shown any vicious inclination! What poor

Lettice did not dare bring home to herself, was the fact, that, although a dozen things might happen, as a matter of plain truth, generally only one thing ever does happen, and that thing is, that the clerk bolts with the money.

John Ashton, for his part, prepared for action by going to Ferris & Halkett's.

Mr. Halkett, on hearing his visitor's business, became more solemn than usual. It was an occasion for showing that Draconian impartiality for which the house was famous.

"We have," he said, "four hundred employés. If we show leniency to one who departs from the straight path, probably the other three hundred and ninety-nine will follow in the sinner's track."

It is a plausible argument, and only breaks down in its weakest point, because it assumes that fear of punishment is the only deterrent from crime. As a matter of fact, most of the other three hundred and ninety-nine clerks would be found to have self-respect. Therefore, they would not take to evil courses, even though brother Barabbas escaped the clutches of the law.

"Well, sir," said John, without intending any irreverence, "the Lord has got more than four hundred servants. If He were as unrelenting in the punishment of sins, where should we all be?"

"I hope, Mr.—Mr.—Ashton," Mr. Halkett looked at the card, "I hope that you do not come here to shock my religious feelings."

"Not at all, sir," said John. "I want to know what you are going to do about young Langton."

"Prosecute him," said the merchant shortly. "Make an example of him for the benefit of his fellow-clerks. If he is not caught, or does not surrender within four-and-twenty hours, I shall issue a reward for his apprehension. That is what I am going to do."

"Suppose I—suppose some one—were to come forward and say, 'I will pay the money for him, on condition that you let him go?'"

"That would be of no use, none whatever."

Mr. Halkett leaned back in an attitude of uncompromising virtue—you get that by throwing your head back, placing one hand on the arm of your chair, and the other straight before you flat upon the table. Try it!

"That would be of no use," he repeated. "What have we lost? Eighty-five pounds in gold, and notes, whose numbers are probably stopped. Nothing. What have we to gain by the prosecution of one clerk? The honesty of all the rest. Is that nothing?"

"Well, sir," said John Ashton, "you are the boss of this establishment, and you can do just as you please. But I pity this country if every boss is like you."

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Mr. Halkett, in a rage.

"I mean this, sir. First, that I will try to find the poor boy; and, guilty or not, if I find him, you shall not—depend upon that. Second, that you may call yourself a Christian, but you are not. Not the first elements of that religion about you, sir. The boy is missed; you conclude at once that he has stolen the money? How do you know that? You are going, on Christian principle, to act on that assumption, and parade his name all over England; and you refuse to accept, meanwhile, the restoration of the lost or stolen property. Good-morning, Mr. Halkett. If you come over to Canada, I'll give you a little more of my mind."

John strode away in a great rage. But wrath never yet found a missing clerk, and he began to think what he had better do.

First, he took a cab and drove to the boy's lodgings.

He lived in Featherstone Buildings, Holborn, having, like his friend Kugel, a single room. Unlike Kugel, he had a landlady who knew where he was employed, and what, too, was his daily manner of life.

John explained to the woman from whom and why he was come—the boy's disappearance, his sister's anxiety.

She hesitated a little, and then she told her tale.

"He was as good a lad as ever walked, I do believe," she

said. "As good as he is handsome, until three months ago, when he got to know that Kugel."

"Who is that Kugel?"

"He is one of the sort that find their pleasure in smoking, drinking, betting, and low society," she went on. "One of the sort that get hold of young fellows like Mr. Langton and ruin them. I know him."

"Where can one find this Kugel?"

"I don't know where he lives now, but I know where you will find him most evenings, because young Mr. Langton, who's got no more deceitfulness in his disposition than that bit of wool, told me. He is always to be found in the Connaught Music Hall, where the betting-men congregate to make their wicked bets, or in the Royal Leinster Arms, where they meet, them and their friends, to play billiards, and a pretty place that is for a young gentleman with a character."

Leaving a message with the woman for her lodger in case he should turn up, John sent a telegram to Lettice, telling her what he had done so far. After despatching his telegram he reflected that he could do nothing more till the evening, and that it would be much pleasanter to sit with Lettice, telling her all about it, than to sit alone. So he took a cab and drove to Great St. Simon Apostle, where he found the girl still trembling and wretched, sitting alone in her dismal room at the back of the house. Mr. Pomeroy was probably in his office, and John sat with her, none to say him nay, trying to pour comfort into her heart so full of misgiving. Of comfort there could be but little, but there was promise of help; and it was something for the desolate girl to think that she was not altogether without friends. There was this stalwart young fellow, so strong and brave, working for her. He was her friend; this man who but a week ago had been a stranger, her friend. Not a thought crossed her inexperienced and uneducated brain that he would ever think of being something more. Other girls, as perhaps she knew, had lovers and married; for herself, she never thought of such a fate. As well might the imprisoned

canary-bird dream of the bright skies and breezy groves of the islands whence his ancestors were brought. The iron of her prison had entered into her soul. And yet—so receptive, so open to influence is the nature of a girl—already a new life was being born within her; new thoughts were crowding in her brain, new hopes. The dull monotony of her silent and friendless days was broken. She thought it was only interrupted; but it was broken.

"You have known me only a week," she said shyly, "and yet you are so kind. Are all Canadians like you?"

He did not say what rose up in his heart. It was no time to talk of love when she was in so dire a trouble; else he would have told her that his kindness did not spring from friendship, nor from his Canadian education, but from a deeper source, perhaps a more selfish one.

"We are old friends already, are we not?" he said; "just as if we had known each other all our lives. And now it is half-past five, and I must go. Have hope, Miss Langton; to-morrow I will report what I have done."

"Hope!" she echoed, with the tears in her eyes. "Yes, I have hope while you are here. Everything seems easy; but when you are gone, and I am alone, then the misery begins. Poor Will! my poor, dear brother. Oh, he cannot—he cannot have—taken the money!"

"No, never believe that," said John stoutly.

"Yet Mr. Pomeroy thinks so. And before you came I was having dreadful thoughts of—of policemen and trials; things one has read of. Oh, tell me," she passed her hand across her forehead, "tell me, is it a dream? Are you a dream? Will you pass away and leave me here again in this great, silent house, where no one ever comes, and no one ever speaks? I used to have dreams in the daytime before you came. They crossed my brain when I was awake, and sometimes I did not know whether I was sleeping or walking in my sleep. And now I feel the same again, just the same as if I was walking in my sleep."

John caught her with both hands. He could have wept over the pleading eyes and weary voice.

"Lettice!" he cried; "I will never leave you alone again. I am no dream at least. Are these hands a dream? Did ever arms in dreams fold you round like this?"

She drew herself away frightened and confused.

"Forgive me, Lettice," he went on. "But do not talk like that—you terrify me. Promise me that you will not let such thoughts dwell in your mind. Remember, I am your friend—no dream, unless we are all dreams together—if you will let me be your friend."

"Oh, if I will let you," she said; "I who have never had a friend before!"

He took her hand again, and held it while he conquered the passion that rose to his lips.

"And now I must go," he said, "to look for Will. Be patient until to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII.

ASSAULT AND BATTERY.

IN the billiard-room of the Royal Leinster Arms there sat, on the American-cloth-covered bench or divan running along one side of the room, a stranger. He was a tall, strong-looking young fellow, with something of a foreign look about him. He was neither smoking nor drinking—which was in itself unusual—nor did he converse with any of the men who were playing. He sat perfectly still, apparently watching the progress of the game; and when invited to play he declined.

All the players, who met there night after night, knew each other, mostly by nicknames, and the presence of a man who knew no one and refused to drink, play, or smoke, was a gêne. They were mostly quite young men, of under five-and-twenty, though the countenances of some displayed precocity in the direction of ardent spirits. All had pipes in their mouths, and all were drinking. Their conversation was not governed by the restraints usual in society, and

they were probably, as might be guessed by the topics on which they exchanged ideas, profound philosophers. At eight, or thereabouts, a light-haired man, rather older than the rest, wearing glasses, entered the room. He was greeted with a boisterous shout.

"Kugel!" At the name the stranger lifted his eyes and looked curiously at the new-comer.

"Kugel, at last. Where is young Langton?"

"I thought some of you fellows could tell me."

"Well, he is always with you; and you took him away last night. Precious drunk he was, too."

"No; he left before me," said Kugel.

"Why, I walked downstairs with you both," persisted the first speaker.

"My dear fellow, how could that be, when I tell you that Langton left half an hour before me?"

"I suppose I was drunk too, then," the other laughed. "Because I've got a firm recollection of propping Langton up on one side while you helped him up on the other."

"What the deuce does it matter," cried a third, "who went out first? I daresay Langton will turn up some time."

Then the stranger, who was John Ashton, spoke.

"Are you, sir," he addressed the young fellow who said he had seen Langton and Kugel go out together, "certain of what you say?"

"Well, I don't know what concern it is of yours," he replied. "We are all friends here, and we don't know you."

"It concerns you all," said John, "in this way. Langton was here last night with a bag of money in his coat-pocket, belonging to his employers, Messrs. Ferris & Halkett. He did not appear at the office this morning; he has not been home at his lodgings; he has not been heard of anywhere. It is therefore interesting for all of you, because you may be asked questions, to find out with whom William Langton left this room."

They looked at each other in silence. The situation was grave.

Then the one who had first spoken said, in quite a different tone—

"Kugel, you did leave the room with him—I remember it perfectly. Does no other fellow remember anything about it?"

No one did; but two or three seemed to think that they remembered in some vague way. Perhaps every man was anxious to shift a possible scrape off his own shoulders.

"And who are you, sir?" asked Kugel, "coming here to poke your nose into other people's affairs—a Yankee detective?"

No Canadian likes to be called a Yankee any more than the latter likes to be taken for a Canuk. It is a wholesome antipathy which helps to preserve the integrity of the empire. But John preserved his temper.

"I am here on behalf of the boy's nearest relative. I am going to look for that boy. If any of you are his friends, as you pretend to be, you will help me."

They looked at each other.

"Look here," said one of them; "if Langton has bolted with the money, or if Kugel has helped him off, and we get called upon to give evidence it won't do any of us much good to have to state in a witness-box what we know about their goings on, and where we spend our evenings."

There was a general murmur of assent, and a movement towards the hats.

"Kugel," said the one who had helped Langton downstairs, "you may fight your own battles. You did go off with him; and I saw you turn the corner into Holborn with him. And that, if I must swear to it, I will. But as for the rest, I know nothing; and I'm not going to get the sack, if I can help it, from my religious firm by confessing to music-halls and billiard-rooms, and all the rest of it."

They laid down their cues, seized their hats, and dispersed, multivious. Kugel was about to follow, but John laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Not so fast," he said. "You and I must have a word or two before we part. What have you done with the boy?"

"I have done nothing with the boy. I know nothing about him, or his money either."

"Good. Are you going home?"

"Yes, I am."

"I will go with you."

Kugel looked at this stranger. He was taller than himself, broader in the shoulders, and stronger. Nothing was clearer to the German's mind than that, in case of a row, he would come off second best. Without a word he turned and walked down the stairs.

In the street he looked round. The Canadian was with him.

Side by side the two walked in silence along Holborn.

This was at nine o'clock.

At ten o'clock they were still walking side by side, neither speaking to the other. It was the German who spoke first.

"I hope you are not getting tired."

"Thank you," said John, with equal politeness: "I am not at all tired. I like walking in this cool night air."

"The rain, too"—it had began to rain a little—"that refreshes, does it not?"

"It does," John replied, "especially when you have no overcoat."

There he scored, because his companion had none, while he was himself provided with that useful article.

At eleven, they were walking still, but faster, as if they were getting impatient and wanted to be at home.

They were in the neighbourhood of Soho. Suddenly the German stopped at a door. "You live here, then?" asked John.

Kugel rang the bell without answering; on its being opened he stepped in quickly, followed by John. They went upstairs, and John found himself in a room at the back,

where sat two men engaged over some papers; they huddled them up and one of them crammed them hastily into his pocket.

"It's Kugel," he said with surprise. "What's the meaning of this, Kugel? And who have you brought here?"

"I don't know," said the German; "it's a man who follows me about and wants to find out where I live."

The two looked at each other; evidently something was wrong.

"He has," John explained, "kidnapped a boy who had three hundred pounds upon him."

The pair—they were both young men with preternaturally keen faces—turned to their friend for further explanation.

"It's a lie," said Kugel; "I know nothing about the boy."

"Then take me to your lodgings," John went on. "If you know nothing about him, why do you try to hide your address? Now, gentlemen," he said, "I don't know who you are, nor what your trade is; if you like to shelter this fellow, say so, and I'll raise mischief—for I'm bound to find out where he lives. If it comes to fighting, wild cats is the word."

Now the pair upon whom John had lighted were by no means warlike; also, there were many private reasons why they did not wish to be mixed up in any affair that might bring publicity; it is always unpleasant, for example, to be asked to explain how one has been employed for the last few years. They were, in fact, betting men by profession, and to this they added such schemes of plunder as imagination, stimulated by intense love of ease and luxury, might suggest. At present they were concocting a method of preying on the credulous, which they afterwards matured, and by which they subsequently achieved fame. In fact, their greatness has been recently published in every paper, was made the topic of leading articles by the ablest editors, and is now rewarded by a term of years in Portland.

"Well, Kugel," said one of them after a pause, "you see, it isn't our plant. Kidnapping boys with money about them is a deuced awkward job. Perhaps," he looked at John furtively, "perhaps the gentleman would square the job —for a percentage?"

"Then I stay," said Kugel, sitting down.

"Wild cats," replied John meaningly.

Here the two whispered together and one pronounced the verdict.

"We are not going to be mixed up in it, Kugel. That's positive. And though we're sorry for you, we can't help ourselves. You must go."

"I stay here," repeated Kugel. He was already half dead with fatigue, and wet through with rain.

"Come, Kugel, we can't keep you—we can't and we won't. There."

"This is being pals," said Kugel.

"Well, as for the matter of that, we're not pals. If you had come to us by yourself something might have been done. As it's your own job—come, get out."

He saw that there was no longer any chance, and reluctantly went down the stairs, John with him.

When their visitors departed, the two gentlemen of the turf sat down again to resume their calculations.

It was raining faster and the streets were quite deserted.

"Now," said John, "I am getting tired of this; will you take me home with you?"

"No."

"Then what I shall do is this: I shall wait till we pass a policeman, and as soon as he is well in sight, I shall commit an assault upon you. Then he will take us in charge; I can say who I am and where I live—and you must."

It was a notable device, and gratified at once the Canadian's desire to horsewhip the fellow, and to find out, as well, where he lived. Because by this time he was certain that the misery of walking about all night was a less evil to the man than the fear of letting any one know the secret of his lodgings.

"You see this cane," he went on in a friendly way. "It's lighter than it looks and pretty flexible. It is a kind of cane which, laid across the shoulders, is calculated to curl round and bite into fleshy places in the arm. I should say you would find this cane hurt a good bit."

Kugel made no answer.

In a quarter of an hour or so after this speech a policeman appeared, slowly walking down the street.

"Better take me home," said John.

"No," replied the German.

"Then," said John, "if you will, have it." He lifted his arm and brought down the cane with such strength as he was wont to put into the handle of his axe upon Kugel's shoulders. As he anticipated, the cane curled round and caught the unlucky clerk in the fleshy part of his arm. Kugel yelled with pain. The policeman stopped and turned on his lantern. John repeated the stroke. The policeman was startled. Here was quite an unexpected affair. An assault by one quiet-looking man walking with another, apparently unprovoked, and under his very eyes!

"I give him in charge," cried the clerk; "I give him in charge for an assault. You saw him do it."

"Yes," replied the custodian of order; "I certainly saw him do it. What did you do it for?" he asked. "Come, better go home quiet, both of you. Past twelve o'clock, too, and a rainy night."

"Take him in charge," shrieked Kugel, stamping his foot with rage and pain.

The policeman hesitated.

"I surrender," said the Canadian. "Let us go to the police-office."

At the police-office a very unexpected thing happened. John thought that all he had to do was to give his name and address and come away. But he forgot one important point, that unknown persons charged with breaches of the peace are not, as a rule, allowed to walk away after the formality of writing down their names. And when John had seen his name entered, and proposed to walk away with

an engagement for the next morning, he was disagreeably surprised at being informed that he had to pass the night in the lock-up.

This annoyance was aggravated by the delight of Mr. Kugel.

"You have taken his name and address too?" asked John.

That had been done; only when, next morning, John proceeded to hunt up the address given, which was at Hampstead, he found to his disgust that the astute Kugel had set down a street which did not exist.

"This," thought John, as he sat down on the stone bench in the lock-up, "this is a satisfactory termination to the evening. I am afraid I have made a mess of it; but I have not done yet."

He refrained from any mention of his reason for assaulting Kugel to the police-sergeant, because it might do harm to young Langton. Besides, as he reflected, he had only to get his address in the morning. Simple young Canadian! But the backwoods are not a congenial field for the study of human artfulness.

Passing the night in a lock-up, not alone, but in the company of other unfortunates, is not, as may be imagined, altogether without drawbacks. There were three companions in misfortune, occupying the same cell with John. One of these was perfectly and completely drunk. He lay on his side, breathing heavily and quite unconscious. Another was a boy, who was asleep when John joined the company, but woke up to ask him, eagerly, what he was "run in" for. Hearing that it was an assault, he made remarks on some people's luck.

"You're a gentleman, you are," he added, as if that fact made things look any blacker for himself. "You'll be had up, an' the beak, he'll say as this is a serious case, an' you'll be fined five quid or a fortnight. An' you'll pay the money and off you goes. What do they do with all the fines, they beaks? Has blows out, yar! An' then my turn 'll come. 'What's he bin an' done?' says the beak. 'I knows that

boy's face.' 'Priggin' at the theayter-door,' says the peeler; 'a profesh pick-pocket, this boy is.' That's how they goes on—swears to it all, bless yer, as if it was gawspel truth. Then the beak, he'll say: 'Five years in a reformatory,' yar! It's just sickenin'—that's what it is."

Then he rolled round, and was off to sleep again in a minute.

There was another man; John couldn't see him, but he heard him from time to time groan as if in pain.

"What is it?" he asked, "are you ill?"

"It is misery—ruin—prison and disgrace," he groaned. And then finding that there was a man who would listen to him, the wretched creature, who had been arrested that evening, poured forth the whole story of his crime and its detection.

A great weight fell upon the soul of John Ashton. The misery of the man became typical to him. He had seen the fast city clerk at his worst—in the billiard-room, and he had heard him at his worst—talking with his like. Now he was with him at the end of his course, in a police-cell. It seemed to him as if all were like this youth—low and coarse in every thought, cunning and unscrupulous in every action. The moral was the same with this poor detected swindler as with the fellow Kugel and Will Langton. Betting, billiards, drink, and the love of "pleasure." He shrank into his corner and wished himself back in Canada—provided Lettice was with him.

In the morning, when his case was called, no prosecutor appeared, and he was allowed to go away.

As for Kugel, he went home rejoicing. To be sure he had been cowhided—the marks of that walking-cane were still upon his shoulders, and the pain of those cuts still burning on his arms. But his enemy was defeated; he had kept the secret of his rooms; and he went home at one o'clock in the morning gaily.

The Frenchman, who was sitting up, heard him return, and instantly prepared to take up his old position at the keyhole. The boy, who had not been out all day, was sound

asleep. Through the keyhole the aspirant for dramatic success observed the villain of the piece turn the clothes down and look at the boy's face.

"Will he murder him to-night?" he thought.

No; not that night, for he replaced the sheet and proceeded rapidly to undress. Then he got out his bottle of spirits, took a longish pull from the mouth of the bottle, and got into bed.

The Frenchman was disgusted. To-morrow, clearly, some fresh steps must be taken.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

"YOU have not found him, then?" cried Lettice in despair.

"No."

John narrated his ill-success, and the easy way in which he had been duped.

"Patience," he repeated, ending his narrative. "I am going to the office again. Perhaps something has turned up there."

"Patience." It was all he could say.

Mr. Halkett was engaged when he called at the office. Would he wait?

John sat down. It was the outside room, a sort of great entrance hall, of the warehouse. There was a large counter, on which stood the smaller boxes waiting to be entered or examined before being sent away. Clerks were at work among them. Presently, John, getting tired of watching this part of the business, began to walk about the place. A swing-door with glass windows led into an inner room, where were fifty or sixty clerks all writing. John tried to work out a little sum in arithmetic, which occurred to him at the moment. So many offices in the City; so many thousands of clerks employed; all the clerks writing,

writing without cessation; how much could one man write in a day? And, if all these men were always writing, where were the men who are always reading? And what was done with the books which they perpetually filled? And, as the generations run on, and England's prosperity continues, what is to become of all these books? And could not an arrangement be made between the Canadian and the British Legislatures to bridge over the Atlantic by means of the old office-books? Two thousand five hundred miles across—well, the ocean being three miles deep, to find the number of books necessary to make a roadway broad enough for a railway-train. It would take a good many, but not more, he began to think, than might be provided by a single generation of a million clerks, working for say thirty years, six hours a day. He would have pursued this interesting research, but on looking through the glass doors, he was thunderstruck to see, among the clerks in the inner room, writing with the rest, his friend Mr. Kugel, the hero of last night's adventures.

Of course he might have guessed as much. Where else would young Langton make friends so readily as in his own office.

This time, he resolved on telling Mr. Halkett all he suspected. At all costs it must be ascertained where the boy was gone to, even if it should lead to his arrest on a charge of embezzlement; but that, John thought, could be averted.

Meantime, Mr. Halkett was keeping him waiting a long time.

He could not help staring through the window at his companion of last night. Yes—there could be no doubt—a man with fair hair and spectacles, about the middle height. Kugel sat with his side-face only in view. He was industriously writing letters in German, with little suspicion that his enemy was only a dozen steps from him, and that the moment of detection had actually arrived.

For upstairs, with Mr. Halkett, was the French journalist. His knowledge of English was limited, but not so limited as

Mr. Halkett's knowledge of French. And it was by gesture, by dramatic action, as well as by language, that he conveyed his information to the English merchant.

When he quite understood what had happened, Mr. Halkett rang his bell and sent for a policeman. The messenger despatched, he was ready to receive Mr. Ashton.

"You, mossoo," he said to the Frenchman, "will have the goodness to sit down by me and say nothing—nothing at all, for the present."

Mossoo complied. He understood that another act of the drama, probably containing the grandest tableau of all, was about to commence.

"Now, Mr. Ashton," said the partner, "you have found out something? You have a clue?"

John shook his head.

"Very little, sir, I am sorry to say. But I ascertained yesterday who was Langton's chief friend, and, to-day, I find he is one of your clerks."

"Ay—ay. That is something."

"It is a man named Kugel."

The Frenchman nodded.

"One of our foreign correspondence clerks. Pray go on, Mr. Ashton. Will you take a chair?"

"I found out where this man Kugel was likely to be found—a billiard-room—and I went there and found him. I asked him what had become of Langton. He refused to tell me, but it was proved that they left the place together, and that Langton was drunk."

"Dronk!" cried the Frenchman. "Mon Dieu! Nevare I see a man so dronk."

John looked astonished.

"Were you there, then?"

"Go on, pray, Mr. Ashton," said the partner. "And then?"

"As he refused to give any account of the boy, I told him I should follow him home. Now, Mr. Halkett, observe that if there were no reason why I should not follow him home, he would have made no objection. But what did he do? Walked the streets till one o'clock in the morning,

and then, when I cowhided him, gave the policeman a false address."

"Oh! You—you cowhided—that is, you thrashed him, did you?"

"I did, sir, and now, Mr. Halkett, as I am sure that when we find out this clerk's lodgings, we shall learn where the boy has gone, or get upon his track, I have an offer to make you. I am not rich, but I have a few hundreds. They are my mother's property, but I can use them. I will pay you the whole amount by cheque, at once, if you will undertake to let the boy go."

Mr. Halkett hesitated. "You know," he said, "what I told you yesterday. This case, however, is different. I know more than you, my friend, as you will speedily find out. And I may tell you beforehand, that there will be no prosecution. The boy, whether guilty or not in intent, of which I know nothing, is innocent in reality."

"Thank God!" said John.

"And—if I may ask—what relation are you, sir, pray, to the boy?"

"None at all, sir; I have never seen him."

"Then what—what reason have you for proposing this generosity on his behalf?"

"A selfish one, Mr. Halkett. I want to take the boy back to his only sister, and I want to ask that young lady to marry me."

"Ah!" said the Frenchman, throwing up his hands. "It is beau-ti-ful. It is ravishing. It is a tableau for ze Porte St. Martin. Why do I give ze money? Am I fool? am I mad? No—it is not zat I am fool. It is"—here he slapped his heart with emotion—"it is zat I lo-ove the Engleesh mees. Tableau!"

Here the policeman was introduced.

"You will be good enough, policeman, to stand behind the screen until I touch the bell. You, Mr. Ashton, and you, mossoo, had better go behind the screen, too"—it was a big old-fashioned screen—"and you will all then wait there till I ring the bell. Then you can come out."

"A moi," cried the Frenchman, leading the way behind the screen. "You, Monsieur le Gendarme, here; you, monsieur, here; I in ze front. Hein? When ze bell rings, I am in front; I dash ze screen aside—so; it falls with a—how you say?—grand fracas. Tableau!"

This was exactly what happened. When Kugel was summoned into the chief's presence, a minute later, they were all there ranged behind the screen in safe concealment.

"I sent for you, Kugel, in reference to this affair of young Langton's."

"Yes, sir."

"I understand that you were his most intimate friend."

"I certainly was his friend," said Kugel.

"Can you throw any light on the affair?"

"Nothing whatever, sir, I assure you; I wish I could. He did tell me, walking away from the office, that he ought to have paid some money into the bank, but was too late."

"He did not say that he had the money upon him."

"No, sir, I did not ask him. I think it very unlikely that he would have carried all that money away with him."

"True; it seems unlikely. Well, you left Langton early that evening?"

"We walked together to a place where I often stop for a cup of coffee"—O Mr. Kugel, and all that gin and water?—"and there he left me."

"Did Langton, now, frequent billiard-rooms, music-halls, or places of that sort?"

"Not to my knowledge; but I could not say with certainty. It was not likely," he added, with a smile all sweetness and light, "that I should ever meet him at such places. My evenings are differently spent."

"I am glad to hear it. Then, Kugel, I am to understand that you know nothing whatever of this business?"

"Nothing at all, sir, further than what I have told you."

"And you cannot guess where William Langton now is? Think. You were with him a good deal; can you not

suggest any place where he might have fled to escape the consequences of his act?"

"I cannot form the least idea."

"He was in debt, it appears. A man has been here to-day asking for him, and stating that a promise was made that he should be paid yesterday—yesterday, the very day on which he disappeared. That makes the case look worse."

"I am surprised to hear that he was in debt," replied Kugel. "He did not tell me of it. But I think, sir, that you somewhat exaggerate my intimacy with Langton. I really know very little about him, certainly not so much as some others more of his own age in the office."

"Very well, then. I have no other questions to ask you. Come, Kugel," said Mr. Halkett, with a sudden change in manner, "you are lying. You know where young Langton is."

"I do not. And I am not lying," he replied doggedly.

"You know where he is, and you know where the money is. Will you give him up?"

"I do not know. I have not seen him since he left me on Wednesday evening."

"In that case——" Mr. Halkett struck his bell sharply.

The screen behind his chair was instantly drawn aside, and Kugel saw the enemy who had followed him so persistently the night before, a policeman, and a man whom he had never seen before.

He turned pale and trembled.

Then he remembered that he had given a wrong address. No one, at any rate, knew where he lived.

And yet they looked so confident and so certain, those two men—the one whom he knew, and the other, a black-haired man with sharp eyes, who stood with folded arms, and only advanced, as if he was on a stage.

In fact, the Frenchman was on a stage. This was his situation. A screen scene is not new on the stage, and Lady Teazle is not the only woman who has been hidden behind one. But it is always effective, and the French-

man was thinking how the thing would look on the boards. In his own mind he represented that character so dear to all French novelists, playwrights, and poets—the instrument of Fate. He, a Frenchman, was bringing destruction and punishment upon a scoundrel, who was also a German.

It was delightful—it was sensational.

One drawback only interfered with perfect enjoyment of the situation. The Canadian was acting his part capitally, the Frenchman thought. As a matter of fact, John was simply looking with some kind of pity mixed with wonder at the culprit, who he felt sure was about to be exposed. Now when an actor succeeds in looking natural he acts well; but the grouping was spoilt by the policeman, who had no dramatic talent whatever, and stood as if he were a machine or a soldier at drill.

"Now, Mr. Ashton," said Mr. Halkett, "we are going in search of this lost boy. Kugel will be taken with us."

They went down stairs, a procession of five, headed by Mr. Halkett. The middle man of the five was Kugel, who said nothing. Great astonishment was excited in the office when it became known that Kugel had gone off with the chief, with a policeman, and with two strangers, in a cab. Everybody connected this unwonted business with young Langton, but opinions were divided as to the meaning of it. And the busy pens stopped for a few minutes while the writers laid their heads together and whispered. For some thought that Kugel was proved to be an accomplice in the embezzlement, and others thought that he had found out where Langton had hidden himself and told Mr. Halkett—which seemed mean; others, again, thought that the strangers had brought information to the office, on which Kugel would be called to give evidence. A kind of awe, not without a certain pleasantness of its own, fell upon all in the office that morning. One among them—one of the youngest—was suspected of a grievous crime; another might be concerned in it. The disgrace of those two fell on the young men's hearts as a note of warn-

ing, and those who owed debts, or had bad consciences, resolved on immediate reform.

Meantime the Frenchman sat on the box beside the driver, and within the cab were the other four, all perfectly silent.

In Kugel's lodgings sat poor Will Langton alone, as perfectly miserable as a boy can well be. His adviser recommended him to lie close, and not to stir out of the house under any circumstances. He could not if he wished, because he had no hat, and his coat had been slashed and cut by the robber who stole the money. It is not healthy to sit for forty-eight hours in a bedroom on a ground-floor back, afraid even to open a window for fear of being seen. Add to this the wretchedness produced by disordered liver —one result of that fatal night's intoxication—by too much tobacco, and by the ever-gnawing pain of a reproaching conscience. It was to this misery that Kugel's counsels led him. And what would Lettice—poor Lettice!—say? What would be her agony and shame when the thing was known to her?

How, too, could he get away? He had no money, Kugel had no money. And if the latter could find any, where could he go? To America? But he must first elude the police, who as Kugel told him—lying in this as in everything else—were already searching for him. There were no books to read, because the tenant of that room cared for nothing in the way of printed matter but the betting intelligence and the faces of cards. So that the prisoner had to sit in an almost intolerable solitude, with no other resource but to smoke, eat, and drink.

He was doing none of these things when the cab drove to the door. He was sitting with his head in his two hands at a table, gazing vacantly before him, trying in vain to find some solitary gleam of comfort; and the tears were rolling down his face. Should he write to Lettice? Should he at least tell her that he was innocent, but afraid to leave his present asylum? And then he started to his feet in

terror, because he heard steps in the hall, and because these steps were coming straight to his own door.

The first who entered was Mr. Halkett himself—the man of all men he most dreaded. Behind him came a policeman—and at sight of him the boy dropped his head upon the table and sobbed aloud. He did not wait to see who came after. It was enough for him that he was to be apprehended, because the civil power was present in the flesh.

"Langton," said Mr. Halkett, "stand up, sir, and tell me about this."

He stood up and brushed away his tears.

"I lost the money, sir." Here he saw his friend.

"You here, Kugel!" he cried.

"Tell us, Langton," repeated Mr. Halkett, "how you came here, and why you are staying here."

"Kugel brought me," he replied. "Kugel told me that no one would believe me if I said that I lost the money, and that a warrant was out for my arrest. So I was afraid to go away."

"Kugel brought you here?"

"Yes. I was—I was——" Here the boy hung his head for shame. "I was drunk, and did not know what happened. And in the morning I found myself lying in the bed. And oh, Mr. Halkett, I am not guilty. Indeed—indeed—I am not. See, my coat was cut and torn like this. I found it so in the morning. And all the money was gone."

"Why was not the money paid into the bank?"

"I was sent out at half-past three, and on the way met Kugel, and we stopped to talk. And he had to tell me that Cassandra had lost the race."

"Cassandra? Cassandra lost——"

"The Cambridgeshire stakes. We had both backed the horse. Kugel advised me. I should have won twenty pounds, because the odds were twenty to one. And Kugel would have won a hundred."

"Oh!" said Mr. Halkett, getting interested. "And so Kugel bets, does he? Before we go any farther, tell me where you generally spend your evenings."

The boy blushed again.

"Sometimes we go to music-halls and sometimes to play billiards."

"You and Kugel? Go on. Why did you not return the money to the cashier?"

"Because it was half-past four when I got back, and I thought I would step round in the morning and no one would know. I was afraid to tell him I was too late."

"Who knew of your having the money upon you?"

"Only Kugel, unless I told anybody else when I—got drunk."

"A lad who confesses to being a drunkard——"

"No, sir; no. It is the only time in all my life."

"To be afraid of telling the truth, to waste his evenings in low haunts, to bet upon horse races—do you think that lad a fit person to remain in my office?"

Will Langton made no reply.

"Now, sir," he turned to Kugel, who was sitting down with an air of great composure. "First of all, you are dismissed my service."

"Very good," said Kugel. "Go on."

"Next you are given in charge for robbing this boy, Langton, of the money which he has lost."

Kugel laughed. But it was rather an uneasy laugh.

"Prove it," he said. "Prove it. I find the boy drunk on a doorstep, I pick him up and carry him home in a cab. He was robbed already when I picked him up."

"They left the billiard-room together," observed John. "That I can prove."

"Listen," said Mr. Halkett, "to a plain tale. Would you repeat," he asked the Frenchman, "would you repeat the story you told me?"

The Frenchman took up a position within the door. It was a small room, and a good deal crowded by the presence of so many, so that there was not much scope for dramatic action. But he proceeded to get as much effect out of the narrative as possible.

"It is midnight. Ze bells have struck ze hour. Ze streets

are silent. It rains, and those who sleep not hear ze dropping upon ze stones. Hark! A voiture—a cab. Ze door open himself. A step of foot make himself to hear. A step of foot which carries—aha! What do that step of foot carry?"

"Idiot of a Frenchman," cried Kugel. "Go on. I carried the boy to bed, because he was drunk."

"It is very well," replied the narrator. "I proceed, I am idiot of Frenchman, am I? We shall see."

"On ze bed that boy," he pointed to Will Langton, "lies, his face is red and—what you say?—gonflé, because he has dronk ver much pell-ell. His eyes are half shut—so—and he breathe—so—hunc, grunc. Nevare I see a boy more dronk. Then our dear friend who call me idiot of Frenchman, he opens ze cabinet, hein? like this"—he opened the common lodging-house chiffonier which stood against the wall; "he take out bottle—an effet—this bottle—and make a glass half gin half water. He gave this to ze boy. Then, that boy's eyes shut tight—so—he breathe more 'ard—hunc, gr-r-r-unc—he is more dronk than before, and he knows nozing—nozing at all."

He paused at this point, and replaced the bottle, which, as a theatrical property, had no longer any use in the drama.

"He next, my dear friend from Gairmony, whom we lo-ove to see, especially when he calls a Frenchman idiot, he takes a pocket-knife—see—like this, perhaps it is ze same knife;" it was in the drawer of the chiffonier, he took it out and opened it. "And by this knife he cuts ze buttons off ze boy's coat—so and cuts ze boutonnières—so—" he imitated the action on his own coat. "Afterwards, he puts ze buttons in ze tiroir of ze cabinet—here is one—aha! and here is ze ozer;" in fact the two buttons were lying there. The policeman compared them with the buttons on Will Langton's coat, and then slipped them into his own pocket. "Afterwards, he takes a sac—a bag—out of ze boy's pocket—so—he opens ze sac, he takes out what is inside it, he lays it all on ze table—so. There is papers,

notes, billets de banque; there is gold, a pile, a heap, a leetle mountain of gold—he counts it all—and when it is counted, he hides it away. Where does he hide it?"

He looked all round for an answer to this question, but no one, not even Mr. Kugel himself, ventured one; the Frenchman went on.

This time he addressed himself to Kugel, whose face was of a deathly pallor.

"Where did he hide it? Aha, voleur, tell to us where did he hide it? In ze bed? No. Shall I tell ze respectable Mr. Halkett where he hide that money?"

He stepped across the room, and felt for a moment or so with his feet. Then assuming an attitude of commanding superiority, coupled with tragic gloom, he said to the policeman, "Lift up ze carpet; find a timber which permit himself to be elevated. There is ze money!"

John Ashton comprehended, though the policeman did not: and lifting the carpet began to search about the planks.

Here Kugel lost his temper, and began, I regret to say, to use strong language. He said that it was very clear that a conspiracy had been got up against his character, the meaning and nature of which he should make it his business to inquire into; that he knew nothing about the money which might be there or might not. That this was all the reward he got for harbouring an ungrateful sneaking boy who was afraid to go back to his work. That those who expected anything from Englishmen, especially when they allied themselves with Frenchmen, were beneath the contempt of thinking men (I omit all the garnish and ornament of his speech); and that—but here he was interrupted by a cry of astonishment from John Ashton. The "timber which permitted himself to be elevated" was found, and the policeman searching beneath it found—nothing. They lit a candle and looked again—nothing!

Then Kugel changed his tone again, and became triumphant.

"Here is a very pretty end to your fine conspiracy," he said.

"Now, Mr. Halkett, produce your proof! A mad Frenchman invents a story for some purpose of his own, which you believe at once without inquiring into the circumstances. I give you notice, Mr. Halkett, great City man that you are, that I will bring an action against you for conspiring to ruin my character. You and every one in this room shall be the defendants. I will ruin you all."

"Aha!" cried the Frenchman, turning up his shirt-cuffs, for this was the grand coup de théâtre that he was about to play. "We have not yet finished the drama. Your money, Monsieur Halkett—it was in notes and gold—ow mosh?"

"Three hundred pounds."

"Be-old your money!" He unbuttoned his coat and drew out of the pocket the bank bag. "Count your money. Hein? You think"—he turned to Kugel—"you think ze fool of Frenchman so great fool as leave ze money for you to take? No, no. Monsieur Halkett, is your money right?"

"It is quite right, sir; and I beg that you will allow me to thank you very much for your prompt and vigorous action. Policeman, you have seen enough to warrant the arrest of this man. We will, if you please, go straight to the Mansion House."

"It is finished," said the Frenchman regretfully. "Ze play is over; let fall ze curtain; make ze gas to descend; let us all go away."

The play, so far as his tableaux were concerned, was certainly over. For Mr. Kugel it threatened to be just beginning.

"Mr. Halkett," said John Ashton, "you have the money. The attempts of this man to steal it have been frustrated. Will it not be a sufficient punishment that he can never obtain another situation in the City, and that his character is gone? Let him go free."

Mr Halkett hesitated. To be sure, the house had lost nothing; and the robbery story depended wholly on the evidence of the Frenchman, who might break down.

"Go, sir," he said at length. "Rid us of your presence. You are free, so far as I am concerned."

Kugel put on his hat and disappeared without a word. As I have heard nothing since about him he has probably returned to his native country, and is now, perhaps, English corresponding clerk in Berlin. But that is mere conjecture.

"And as for you, Langton," said Mr. Halkett, "you have had, I hope, a sufficient warning. You may return to your duties to-morrow; but I shall keep my eye upon you."

"No, sir," said John Ashton. "We thank you, but this boy must not return to your house. First of all, he would have to explain too much and fight against suspicion half his life. But if you will kindly inform the clerks publicly that Kugel is the only guilty person, and that the money has been recovered, it might do Langton great service. There are other reasons why he must not go back to your service."

"What are they?"

"How many clerks have you? Four hundred, we will say. Do you ever consider the lives these clerks live at home? Do you know what temptations there are in this great city for any young man?"

Mr Halkett was silent.

"Of all young men in the world," John went on, "I should say there are none so much tempted as the clerks who have to live alone in lodgings."

"How can I help them?"

"I do not know, sir. What I do know is that you have not tried. Forgive my plain speaking, Mr. Halkett. People say you are a good man. Do something to show it for your servants."

CHAPTER IX.

FATHER AND SON.

JOHN took possession of Will Langton as if the boy belonged to him.

"Come with me," he said; "I will take you to my hotel, where we will get you a new rig-out instead of that torn coat, and where your sister can come to see you."

"Who are you?" asked Will, rather frightened at this exhibition of strength.

"Never mind that now. Come; let us get out of this place as fast as we can. Faugh! I feel as if I was being choked. What are you waiting for?"

"I can't find my pipe and tobacco-pouch."

"Your what? Your pipe? Here's a boy of seventeen pretends he wants tobacco. Come!"

He took the lad by the arm. He was rather a scarecrow to look at, in spite of his shapely features and pink-and-white complexion, being attired in the coat whose buttons were cut off and button-holes slashed, in which he had slept two nights, and in which, during that fatal night of drink, he had rolled about in mud and dust. His linen was yellow, his collar broken and creased, and he had no hat at all.

"I don't know," said John doubtfully, "whether you are worth all the trouble we have had about you. You may be, because your sister is fond of you; though how any one with a grain of self-respect could call himself a friend of that—that fellow"—John cast about for a strong word; but as he did not possess the trick of swearing, none other occurred to him—"that fellow, Kugel, beats me altogether."

He got the boy outside the house at last—the Frenchman was gone back to the British Museum, where he was writing a magnificent London letter to his editor, called "L'Affaire Kugel"—and found a cab to take them back to the Queen's Hotel, St. Martin's. On the way he stopped to make

Master Will a little more presentable; and at last, it being then two o'clock in the afternoon, John was able to deposit the boy in the coffee-room, under strict promise not to leave the hotel, and to hasten to Lettice with the news.

"I told you," he said, "to have patience and hope."

She looked up wearily. It was one of those bad days when everything seemed dreary to her, and there was not even hope left in the bottom of the box.

"Patience! for how long?" she asked. "Hope! for what?"

"For everything, Miss Langton. You need not hope any more; nor be patient any longer. For what you prayed for has come to pass."

"Not—that he is innocent?"

"Yes; that he is innocent! Your brother's innocence is proved; the lost money is found; the guilt is fixed on the right person; we have discovered him; and at this very moment—at least, I think so—Mr. Halkett is announcing to his clerks that Langton has been proved no thief or embezzler."

She clasped her hands together. It was almost too much, in the low vitality to which her sedentary life had reduced her, to receive all at once. She burst into tears.

"O my poor Will! my dear Will! But I do not understand——Mr. Ashton, are you quite sure—quite, quite sure?"

"Quite," he said, smiling. "There is no room for doubt. Your brother is safe at my hotel. The lost money has been found and restored. It is as clear as the day that Will was robbed."

"Oh, let me go to him."

"Presently," said John. "Not just yet. Although the boy was innocent of the crime imputed to him, he was not, I am sorry to say, innocent altogether. I mean," he added hastily, because her face put on suddenly a pitifully-pained look which went to his heart—"I mean that his sins were only those into which a boy, greatly tempted, might easily fall. He had got into bad hands; he was made to go out

night after night, to low places—places which you have never heard of."

And then he told her all, while Lettice shed tears of gratitude and joy.

"What can I say to you, Mr. Ashton?" she sobbed. "I am so grateful—so very grateful—and so happy."

"And yet, only five minutes ago, you were looking out of that prison window, wondering whether there was any room left for hope."

"Yes, it seems so easy, in this quiet house, to lose all hope. Listen! Do you hear any sound at all?"

In the heart of the City; in Great St. Simon Apostle; close to Carmel Friars; in the back room, looking out on a blank wall, there was no sound of any kind. The rumble of cabs and carts fell not down that dry well; the noise of hurrying footsteps was not heard there. All was silent and still as death.

"And you have sat here, day after day, all by yourself, for all these years?"

"All by myself," she echoed. "It is very silent, is it not? And sometimes, as I told you yesterday, I do not know whether I am asleep or awake—whether I dream, or whether I see."

"Poor girl!" he took her hand in his—a passive hand, thin and transparent. "Poor Lettice! Will you let me tell you my scheme for everybody—for you as well as for Will?"

"For me?"

I declare that she had no thought at all, not the slightest thought of love or love-making. That any man should ever come to woo her was not a thing to be thought of for a moment. To be sure she seldom used her mirror, and never with any real feminine understanding; else she might have dreamed another kind of dream.

"Listen, Lettice. Let me call you Lettice, if only for to-day. I must go back to Canada. I promised my mother to return in the spring. But I have seen all I want to see. I have done all I want to do—except one thing. And I

should like to get back to the dear old place in the winter, before the ice breaks up and the snow melts. But I cannot bear to leave you here behind, all alone in this cruel place with no one to speak to. It is dreadful. Lettice, come with me."

"Go with you—to Canada? Mr. Ashton!"

"My name is John," he replied. "I am only a farmer; only a man who farms a two-hundred-acre lot, but we can live upon it. Oh, I have no fear. Everybody does well who can work, and does not drink, in Canada—the best of all countries the world can show. Come with me, Lettice."

She looked at him with surprise. How could she go with him?

"My dear," he went on; "let me say what is in my heart. I love you so that I am afraid to say it. Come with me and be my wife."

"Your wife, Mr. Ashton—your wife? Ah no—it cannot be."

"Why cannot it be?"

"Because—because," she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears; "because I am disgraced, Will and I."

"Disgraced! But I told you he was innocent."

"That is not it. Our father—I told you once we had a great sorrow—he was found dead in a field. He had committed suicide. And they discovered the reason—that he had—oh, the shame and disgrace—he had taken some money."

She hid her face in her hands.

"No one would do anything for us except Mr. Pomeroy. Stern as he is, he has been very kind; because he has kept both Will and me from the workhouse."

"But that is not disgrace, my dear. O Lettice! it is not you who did this—it was your father. What do I care—what would any one out there care, even if they knew, which they do not? Come to me, my love, my dear. Come out with me and be my wife."

"Oh, I dare not," she murmured. "You ask me because you pity me."

"No, no; it is not that. I do pity you, God knows, I

pity you with all my heart. I should be less than human if I did not pity you, my poor, poor Lettice. But I love you too. Oh, my dear, when I think of your sweet face looking up in mine when we drove through London streets —your soft, beautiful eyes——Lettice, come to my arms!"

He drew her towards him, and she fell unresisting upon his breast, while he kissed her a thousand times with every name of endearment and love. She trembled in his strong grasp, but through her heart there ran a new and sweet feeling of protection and safety. He was her king; he would keep her safe; he would take her out of this prison into the world of light and life; they would go away together, Will with them, to a country where no one would know her history, or, if they learned it, would only pity and not scorn her. She would forget, in that country of clear skies and sunny weather, the brooding fancies which were dragging her imagination down into the dust. There should she learn the joys of a sweet pure life, set all round with affection and guarded by her husband's love. John was eloquent, as a man in love can always be; his burning words poured into her soul and waked a new and strange life in her heart. All in a moment she comprehended the full dreariness of her past, the full desolation of the future—without the man who held her in his arms. All in a moment love awoke in her heart full grown.

"You will come with me, Lettice?"

"I will go with you, John," she whispered, "if you will take me."

Presently he drew away gently leaving her blushing and ashamed. Oh, the change that had come over that pale, sweet face, pale no longer; the new light in those sad eyes, sad no longer; the brightness of that clouded brow, clouded no longer. Love, the conqueror, is also Love, the giver of beauty; Love, who puts life into the statue, and a soul into the cold marble.

"I have one more thing to do," said John. "It is the thing for which I came to England. Will you forgive me, beforehand, for deceiving you, Lettice?"

"How have you deceived me—John?" She spoke his name with a little hesitation. It was so strange and new, this feeling that she had given herself away, and was no more free—strange and sweet, the bonds of love!

"It is a deception which has done you no harm, my dear. But now, I wish I had not consented. It would have been better perhaps to have come here with my true name, and shown myself in my true colours."

"Your true name, John?"

"Yes, dear. My name is not Ashton at all. What it is I will tell you in a few minutes. Is Mr. Pomeroy in his office, do you think?"

"I believe so. He seldom leaves it during the day."

"Then wait for me, Lettice, a few minutes only. I am going to bring him here, and tell him in your presence what I have to tell him."

Mr. Pomeroy was sitting at his desk, engaged, I believe, in the soul-elevating work of making out bills of costs. Nothing so develops the best and most generous side of a man's character as that form of labour. I believe that lawyers who have a good deal of this work to do always employ young men of broad benevolence and philanthropic aims, whose object in life is to advance the name of humanity by an example of private generosity.

"Can I interrupt you for a little while, sir?" asked John.

Mr. Pomeroy looked up from his work. His white stubbly hair stuck up all over in a more determined manner than ever; perhaps because he was insisting in his bills on more than a usual amount of generous consideration; and his sharp keen eyes were sharper than ever.

"Interrupt me?" he replied. "Yes, if it is a matter of business; not otherwise. These are business hours."

"It is a matter of very important business. Not a money transaction, but much more important."

"Now that's nonsense, Ashton," Mr. Pomeroy replied good-humouredly; "only a very young man, like yourself, could say that any transaction could be important which

was not connected with money. Love and affection, I suppose you would say. Stuff! no one loves anybody but himself in the world. If they pretend otherwise, make the proper deductions—the largest deductions—and go on your own way."

"Well, sir, you will see. First of all, you will be glad to hear that young Langton has been found. He did not steal the money, which was stolen from him, and has all been recovered."

"Why did he not pay it into the bank?"

"He stopped talking in the street till it was too late. Mr. Halkett has very kindly promised to inform the servants of the firm of his innocence. But he will not go back there, and I want your sanction to his going out to Canada with me."

"To Canada? Well, it would take him out of the way."

"You do not like the boy?"

"I dislike all boys. Remember, Ashton, these two children of my old friend Langton, who, as perhaps you know, got into a mess with his accounts and cut his throat, have no claim whatever upon me. Because he was my friend once, and because he once did me a great service, I have educated his orphans. The girl behaves well; she never talks, and gives no trouble. Take him, by all means. He is now about seventeen. I have been allowing him forty pounds a year. I will give him—no, I will give you for him, which will be better—that amount paid in advance for four years. I never intended doing anything for him after he was one-and-twenty. So that is settled."

"Then you do trust me, sir! Remember, you know very little about me. You have only known me a fortnight."

"I do trust you, Ashton. At least, I believe that you are what the world calls honest. Of course you have got your own purposes to serve, else you would not have come over and forced yourself upon me. Well, I have taught you something, and you have pleased me by your talk. It

is not often that one gets a man unspoiled by town life. It is refreshing. I confess that, though I am not a soft man, as you have found out—— "

"At all events, you are never tired of saying so."

"No; I warn people beforehand. There is nothing soft about John Pomeroy." He banged the table with an air of decision. "Nothing soft in this office, young man. You come here, state your business, pay your money, and go. However, we waste time. Come to the important point—important—without money being concerned in it. Ho! ho!"

"It is so important, sir," said John, hesitating, "that I must ask you to come with me into your private room, and to hear what I have to say—out of this office. I have a reason for this request. What I have to say has nothing to do with business—nothing whatever. It belongs to your private life."

"Well, well; you are a persistent lad. Have your own way."

Mr. Pomeroy locked his office-door very carefully and followed John into the room at the back, the room which was Lettice's cage and his own dining, breakfast, and only sitting-room.

"Lettice," said Mr. Pomeroy, "we have to talk business, Mr. Ashton and I. Will you leave us here alone?"

"No, Lettice," said John, "do not leave us; my business very nearly concerns Lettice, Mr. Pomeroy. And to show you that it does, I must first tell you that she has this morning promised to be my wife. Will you let me take her away, with her brother, to Canada?"

"This was your important business, was it?" asked Mr. Pomeroy. "Well, you are young. You think that marriage is the only business worth anything in life, I suppose. Ah, what enormous deductions! Only an episode at best, and generally an unpleasant one. Well, Lettice" —his voice was not unkind, though it was cold—"what do you say?"

"I have promised," she said, "to go with him."

"Well, then, you will go, of course. You understand, Ashton, from what I have told you, that neither Lettice nor William Langton has any expectations from me—none whatever. My money will not be left to either of them."

"I quite understand that, sir; and in Lettice's name I thank you for the kindness you have shown both to her and to her brother——"

"There—there—gratitude—professions—deductions, deductions. You will not have any wedding fuss; no bridesmaids or nonsense, you know, Lettice. You can go and get married any morning you like. If I have time I will give you away. If not, the clerk can do that just as well. Wedding bells, indeed! If most people knew what was before them, the bells should be a knell; a mourning-coach should be the bride's carriage; and the guests should all be dressed in black, with crape gowns and hat-bands! Wedding-cake and rejoicings! Pah!"

This was not encouraging, but John only laughed, and put his hand round the girl's waist.

"We shall do our rejoicings across the pond, Mr. Pomeroy. Our wedding-bells shall be the bells of the sleigh in which I shall take my bride home; the snow shall be the white cover of our wedding-cake; and the maples in the forest our wedding-guests. Cheer up, Lettice dear, there will be rejoicings enough in the new country over you and me, and songs and dances, too, and joy for all our lives."

"Poor things," sneered the man of experience. "When do you propose to begin this—this pilgrimage of sleigh-bells and snow?"

"We will be married as soon as we can," said John. "But that, too, will depend upon you."

"I will have nothing to do with it, I tell you."

"Wait a moment, sir! I have other business. Sit down and listen." They had been till then standing. "You said, when you first saw me, that my face and my voice reminded you of some one. Of whom, sir?" He bent down, looking full into Mr. Pomeroy's eyes.

"Of—of one I lost, many years ago."

"Of one you loved many years ago, and whom you—drove away!"

"She left me, in her guilt."

"She left you, in her innocence."

"Who are you, sir?" cried Mr. Pomeroy, springing to his feet. "Who are you? and what do you know?"

"I know nothing but that fact, that she is innocent. Whose is my face?"

"It is hers," the man murmured.

"And yours," said John. "I am her son—and yours. Yes, father—it is true! I have come from Canada to tell you that you have a wife living who has long since forgiven you, that you have a son who stands before you, and that I bring with me papers which I have not read, because that would be to think of my mother what is impossible; but papers which will prove to you what I have said. She left you, driven away by you, in her innocence. And a few months later I was born. Lettice dear, that is my deception. In marrying me, you will marry the son of your benefactor."

Mr. Pomeroy, as he listened, trembled. For four-and-twenty years he had been alone, brooding over an imaginary wrong, feeding an insatiable wrath with thoughts of revenge which might have been, a man-hater and a woman-hater.

"Prove your words," he said, "prove your words. How do you know you are my son?"

"You might know," replied John, "by my face and my voice. These letters will tell you more than I can prove. If they are not proof, I have no more to say; I shall then leave you, as I found you, a stranger. If they are proof, you have a son and a wife."

"Give the papers to me."

"Before I give them, think. I am here asking nothing, claiming nothing. As regards your money, I do not know whether you are rich or poor. And as I ask nothing of you, so I owe you nothing. For the care of my childhood, for my education, for my farm, I owe you nothing, and my mother

everything. Remember, then, that I am on her side, whatever you think of these letters."

"You are frank, young man. Before I was your age, I had learned to pay respect to my father."

"You forget, sir; I have never had one."

Mr. Pomeroy took the bundle and tore it open. It was tied round with green tape, which he hastily untied, and began to read them one by one. There were four of them altogether.

John stood watching him. Lettice sat beside John waiting for the end.

When Mr. Pomeroy had read them through he began again and read them all over more carefully.

"I know the handwriting of each," he said. "These are no forgeries. These may, however—but, no—that cannot be. What is your name?" he asked suddenly.

"John."

"John Pomeroy. My name, too. You are my son."

"And my mother?"

"I will write to her myself. There are things to say which no one but myself can say. She has been—deeply—wronged," he added slowly. "You do not know the contents of these letters?"

"No, sir."

"You do not know the cause of our estrangement?"

"No, sir."

"Better not. There are four documents here. The first is from Eli Ramsden, the Quaker, to your mother, stating what he knew; it is not much, but it is something. The second is an account drawn up for her by her brother, Stephen Burdacomb. The third is your mother's own account. And the last is a letter written on the morning of the day when he died, by the man who—— Ah!"

He almost shrieked as he uttered the last word, and his eyes fell on Lettice.

"The man who—the man who did the mischief—who lied, and culumniated, and made up a story against the woman he had wished to marry; the man who ruined my home out

of revenge—that man—that man——" his face grew purple, and his eyes shot fire, "that man was your father. Do you hear, you girl—your father?"

John laid his hand on Lettice's shoulder and kept it there.

"Patience, Lettice dear," he whispered.

"You, whom I took out of the gutter and have brought up—do you hear? Daughter of a bankrupt, swindler——"

"Stop, sir. This is my future wife—your son's future wife."

"Never," said his father. "Go; leave my house within a quarter of an hour; starve; beg your bread, or steal it for what I care. Go from my house."

"If Lettice goes it shall be with me," said John.

"O John, John!" cried the poor girl, "I told you we were disgraced; but I did not know of this. Yes, sir, yes; I will go. It is not right that I should stay any longer under your roof, nor that I should think of marrying your son. Forgive me, sir. I did not know. Indeed, indeed, I did not know."

"My Lettice!" cried her lover, catching her in his strong arms as she rose in her agony and terror, and holding her tight to his heart. "Do you think I would let you go? Is this bygone history to part you and me?"

"John, I cannot. Think of your mother."

"Yes," said his father. "Think of your mother, if, in the headstrong stream of passion, you can think at all. How will it be to go out to your mother and say, 'Here is your new daughter; the girl whose father ruined your happiness?'"

"That is not what I shall say to my mother. I shall say, 'Lettice is the innocent daughter of a man who wronged you and died repentant.' Lettice, you do not know my mother, or you would not let that be a plea. You, sir, have forgotten her."

"You are my son," said Mr. Pomeroy. "I did not think I had a son. I hardly knew—I did not care—if I had a wife. But hear me. Choose between me and that girl. Henceforth I shall think of her with the hatred that belongs

to her father. Take her and leave me—never to see me again. You shall be dead to me. I give the same choice to your mother as to you. Choose between me and this girl."

"I choose—not between you and Lettice," said John, still holding the girl round the waist, "but between revenge and love. And I choose for my mother as well. Come, Lettice, we will go. You shall stay with your brother till we can be married. Cheer up, my darling, it is not you who shall suffer for your father's sin."

"Yes, and for the third and fourth generation," cried his father. "Scripture authority for you."

"There is yet another Scripture," said John solemnly. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. Think over that. We leave you, your son and the girl to whom you have been a protector for so long. In the solitary winter evenings, when you sit here alone, night after night, with your thoughts, you will remember sometimes the wife and son whom you have thrown away in wild revenge. The very chairs will cry out to you aloud of the innocent girl you have driven away in wrath—the second woman whom you should have loved. And when you think of the things you have thrown away, remember that across the ocean we shall be all together, waiting only for the day when you will write and bid us come back to you."

"Never," said his father. "Never. Henceforth, I sit alone and trust no man again. Go."

"Shake hands, sir. Let me tell my mother that you have given your hand to your son."

"No," he replied. "You have chosen. I have no wife and no son—I never had—I never will have. Take that girl out of my sight, lest I do her, or you, or myself a mischief."

They went together, Lettice weeping. The door closed behind them, and Mr. Pomeroy was left alone. Down the stairs into the court, noisy with hurrying footsteps; out into the busy and hurrying world, away to the hotel where Will Langton, dressed and in his right mind, which was a penitent one, was waiting for his sister.

Clients came to see Mr. Pomeroy that day, but they could not gain admission to his office. It was empty, and the tenant was in the back room alone, looking out on the wall. In his hand was the packet of letters. His lips were set tight, and his eyes were angry and fixed. There was no repentance, yet, in old John Pomeroy's face, whatever might come later.

"And so you see, Lettice," says John, when Will has told his tale, and John his, all over again, and he and Lettice were sitting side by side, her hand in his, while Will looked on marvelling, "and so it was not my doing at all; and you have not me to thank, but our friend the Frenchman."

"I should like to thank him," Lettice replies. "Do you think you can find him?"

That was not difficult, and the writer of "L'Affaire Kugel" —the account of which made so great a sensation when it appeared in Paris—was that same day captured by John and brought to the hotel, to be introduced to the young English "mees," whose charms he so graphically described in his letter.

M. Henri de Rosnay received Lettice's congratulations, in the grand style. John asked him to dinner, and they all four dined in great state and ceremony. It was that part of the conclusion of the drama which one does not put upon the stage, but imagines; the tamely happy part. Who cares to read about other people's happiness? Who wants to see innocence and content upon the stage? He wrote very nicely about it in a subsequent letter, called "Conclusion of the Affaire Kugel," speaking of the boy's modest demeanour after his unmerited misfortunes; his sister's happiness innocently sparkling in her eyes; the tall young Canadian, in whom, he said, ignorant of his real birth, there existed still the traces of his French ancestry in his bravery, his strength, and his chivalrous devotion to the ravishing "mees." "Who can be surprised," he wrote, "at finding in a Canadian all the virtues which characterise our own race, when we reflect

that Canada was once wholly French? These brave highlanders"—he thought the country was alpine—"hardy, like all who dwell upon the slopes and in the valleys of great mountains, are sturdy, pious, and gallant. At the same time, my friend, I must own, has one great, one very great fault. He does not appreciate the wine of our country. He is a "teetotaller" in the language of England. The bottle of champagne in which I drank health and happiness to the young lady was placed upon the table for my use only. I am invited to visit his estates in Canada. In the interests of your readers I will flinch from nothing. I will even, if that is necessary, brave the voyage across the perilous Atlantic, and risk my scalp amongst those savage Hurons among whom Atala roved, and of whom Voltaire wrote. Expect, therefore, if I survive, to hear of travels and dangers in the Canadian Wilds."

The sentiments of M. de Rosnay were, it may be seen, superior to his geography.

"And are you quite sure—quite, quite sure," asked Lettice, when their guest was gone, "that your mother will welcome me?"

"As sure," said John, "as I am that she is a Christian. And now, my darling, there is only one more thing to do. And that is to be married. Where would you like to be married? Here, in the close and stifling city, or away where we can see green fields and trees and breathe fresh air?"

"If it could be in the country——" said Lettice.

"Then it shall be. We will go away to-morrow morning to Moulsey Priors, where Eli Ramsden will take us in, and we will be married among our own folk—at least, among their graves. There, my dear, before the altar we will forgive the past, and make the old wrongs impossible to be ever spoken of again. And then by the very next Allan ship that sails for Canada, we will go back to the dear old place beyond the sea."

"And your father, John?"

His face hardened a little.

"I had forgotten I had a father almost. Lettice, I cannot pretend. I wish it had been otherwise, for my mother's sake, but I have not the feeling for him that I have for her. Remember that I have grown up with her alone, and that I have known him but a short three weeks. I am sorry, but I shall not make myself miserable over what cannot be helped. And he used cruel words to you, my Lettice——"

"John," she said, "you must forget them. Promise faithfully that you will forget them. They must be as if they had never been spoken." Another kiss. "O John! And you have only known me three weeks. And suppose, John —suppose I should not turn out what you think?"

They were married very soon afterwards in the little village church of Moulsey Priors, whose holy acre holds all the buried Pomeroys, and Langtons, and Burdacombs. There were no bridesmaids, and no wedding-bells. But Eli Ramsden the Quaker was there, and Will Langton gave away his sister.

In Great St. Simon Apostle Mr. Pomeroy sat drawing out his bills, making in them no Deductions at all, either small or large.

CONCLUSION.

"SHEPHERDS ALL AND MAIDENS FAIR."

WE are back again, two months later in Clear Sky Land. It is autumn no longer, but the very heart and middle of winter. Snow everywhere; rivers frozen up; lakes frozen up; the scarlet and crimson leaves of the maples fallen and buried in their white covering; the pines standing up black against the white pall which wraps the sleeping world.

If nature sleeps, man is awake; you hear the lumberer's axe ringing in the forest; the crash of the great trees, as he drags them over roads made navigable, so to speak, by ice and snow; sometimes the quaint old French song of the seventeenth century, which the sturdy descendant of Jacques Cartier sings between his work. They are all from Quebec

Province, these stalwart lumberers, and in the summer you may find them at work where the Falls of Montmorenci leap five hundred feet into the round basin below, and work the saw mills, and keep three thousand people in comfort and laborious ease. If you were on Lake Rousseau now, you would see on either shore the columns of smoke rising, each like an obelisk, but with feathery hanging top, over every farmstead, because there is not a breath of wind in the still air.

It is afternoon, too, which makes the silence deeper. Yet in young John Pomeroy's farm you would hear signs and sounds of work, if you were there. He is in the farmyard, among the cattle; beside him one man is cutting wood, and another vigorously clearing and sweeping—everything in the open has to be done with vigour in Clear Sky Land. There are no idle days on the farm, and when work is scarce, there is play almost fierce as work. You may make a rink over-night, and skate all next day; you may go to the Dee Bank Falls, and run a toboggan down its slopes of ice and snow, till the exercise, and the rush of the air, and the shouting and laughter, make you warmer in your wrappers than any pedestrian on the roads of Old England, where, to-day, the first snow has been followed by a quick thaw and a soft rain, so that everything is enwrapped in a cloud of steam and haze, and men's breath is drawn with difficulty. Or you may bring out a sleigh and drive along the silent highway beneath the splendid trees, on a road far smoother than in any summer path—a road which covers up all the soft places in the corduroys, and substitutes the easy run of the sleigh for the jolting of the wheels.

Presently, John Pomeroy shuts up work for the day and goes home.

The house is warm and bright. Two faces brighten when he comes in stamping the hard snow from his feet. They are the faces of his wife and his mother. It needs but a look to see that Lettice is happy.

"I for one shall be ready for supper," says John, "as

soon as the clock strikes six. Kiss me, Lettice, dear. This is better than Carmel Friars, isn't it?"

Then a sleigh drives up. Stephen Burdacomb and his wife.

"Happy Christmas to all," he says. "Girls and the children coming along, presently."

Then a young fellow steps in. Heaven! can this be Will Langton—this boy, filled out in the shoulders, set up and strong, his handsome face flushed with health and strength? No late evenings here; no gas and billiard-rooms; no drink and tobacco.

Light the lamp—close the curtains. It is Christmas Eve, and we are going to have a pleasant evening.

Another sleigh with tinkling bells.

"Why," said Stephen in his slow way, "it's full early for the girls, wife, isn't it?"

Not the girls. A man's step in the passage. John went to see who it was.

Not his father?

Yes, old John Pomeroy himself. He was rubbing his nose with a handful of snow.

"It'll come off," he said, "I know it'll come off. Look at it, John."

John examined the feature.

"It is all right, sir," he said; "and how are you?"

"How are you, John? Shake hands. Glad to see you."

All in the most matter-of-fact way, as if he had just come in from a week's journey. No falling into each other's arms at all; no asking for forgiveness on either side. Not a bit. There was nothing soft about old John Pomeroy.

And as they heard that voice within, the elder and the younger lady sprang from their chairs, and caught each other by the hands.

"Mother," says Lettice, "it is Mr. Pomeroy."

They both tremble and shake.

"Take off those furs, John," says the voice outside. "Ah, and now I'll go in. All well, eh?"

He opens the door. Before him stands his wife, the woman he has not seen for four-and-twenty years.

Stephen Burdacomb comes between them.

"I stand by my sister," he began.

"Nonsense, Stephen—how are you? how are you?" replies the man of business, and pushing him aside, holds out both hands to his wife, who falls upon his breast weeping and sobbing, while he whispers something in her ear.

"Kiss me, Lettice, my dear," Mr. Pomeroy goes on, holding out one disengaged hand to the girl. "Hope you find marriage a happy condition of life. Hope your husband treats you well. How are you, Will? And now we will sit down, and talk, and be comfortable. Seasonable weather, Stephen?"

Lettice and Will looked at him with furtive astonishment. This Mr. Pomeroy? He to propose that people should sit down, and talk, and be comfortable? Was he transformed, then?

"Surprised to see me, eh? Well, Lettice, my dear"—he called her for a second time "my dear"—were things real?—"when you went away the home grew uncomfortable. After six or seven years of you about the place one felt lonely. That's the reason. That's all. How's your farm getting on, John?"

All the time he held his wife's hand in his. No sentiment at all about the man. Nothing soft in old John Pomeroy.

"Let us all sit down," he repeated, "and be comfortable."

"I think there is something more, sir," said John quietly.

"What a persistent boy that is of yours, my dear," he remarked to his wife; "he must have been a sad trouble to you all these years. Well—there was something more. And what that was, John, your mother knows already, and that's enough. He's a fine boy, too, wife, and, on the whole, just the son I should have liked. Well—what next? How do you like Lettice, my dear?"

His wife lifted her tearful face and smiled.

"I will answer you as you answered John," she said. "Lettice knows, and that's enough."

"Ah; anything else?" He looked in his quick combative way at Stephen, as if perhaps that worthy man might have an objection or two in his mind.

"Supper," said Stephen.

"That's business-like. That's to the point," said Mr. Pomeroy. "John, my son, I believe I told you, when I last saw you, that I should never forgive you—Kiss me again, Lettice, my dear. You made a most sensible observation about choosing between love and revenge, for which I am obliged to you.—You also quoted a very remarkable passage from the Bible, for which I am more obliged to you. I said I should never forgive you. Said I had no wife and no son. Well, you must make Deductions—Large Deductions."

SUCH A GOOD MAN

SUCH A GOOD MAN

CHAPTER I.

THE CITY DINNER.

THE Master and his two Wardens are in the anteroom receiving the guests. They are surrounded by a Court consisting of officers, chaplain, and the Livery. It is not an ordinary Company dinner, but one of their great banquets. A foreign ambassador is present; a cabinet minister, who will give the dinner a political significance, and perhaps drop a hint in the matter of Eastern politics; there is the latest thing we have to show in the way of a soldier who has seen service, and actually commanded an army; there is one of the oldest extant specimens of the ancient British admiral, bluff and hearty; there is a bishop of pronounced Evangelical opinions, he of Bamborough; and there is a dean, who is declared by his enemies to have no opinions at all. There are also two or three of the City clergy, who perhaps rejoice to make of these banquets an occasion for fasting and mortification of the flesh. There is a man of science, on whom the clergy look askance, because he has lately uttered opinions which as yet they do not see their way out of; there are many rich men; there are no artists and no representatives of literature, because the Lord Mayor works off both these classes of humans in two dinners, which is, the Lord knows, sufficient honour for them, and City Companies know nothing about literature or art. There is a full gathering of the Livery; there are servants in gorgeous costumes; there is a lavish abundance of costly flowers;

there is the brightness of innumerable gas-jets, playing in wood carvings on picture frames, losing itself in massive furniture and heavy carpets of triple pile. Everything is solid, magnificent, and rich. To be one of the guests standing in the semicircle round the Master and Wardens is to feel for the time that you have hitherto lived in a dream, that your balance at the bank, whose supposed exiguity has frequently given you so much anxiety, is in reality a splendid sum of five figures at least—else, how could you be in such company? that the suburban villa has no existence, and the pre-matrimonial dinginess of Gray's Inn never, in plain fact, existed; that your whole life has always been spent in and naturally belongs to such palaces as this abode of the City Company; that your every-day dinner, your plain cut of mutton with a glass of thin claret, as you have always supposed it, has really been from the very beginning such a banquet as you are about to assist at; and that doubt, insecurity, anxiety, necessity for work have no real existence at all in the order of things. Because the air that you breathe, the aspect of the guests, the sonorous names which ring like massive gold coins, and the place you are in fill you with the sense of a fatness which is stable and abiding.

Guest after guest, they come crowding in singly and in pairs. His Highness of Hyderabad, Ek Rupiya Dao, ablaze with diamonds. His Excellency the Minister for the republic of El Dorado: did his smiling and courteous Excellency, in his own tropical retreat beneath the palms of that much borrowing country, ever dream in his wildest moments of such a dinner as he is about to put away? and does he feel that his presence, recorded in the daily papers, will assist the new loan? The Ambassador of Two Eagle Land, said to be the most courteous minister ever sent to London—also said to be the greatest of—but that is calumny. The Archbishop of Kensington: doth monseigneur seek for new converts, or doth he desire to make up for the rigours of Lent, now happily finished and got through? and would he mind repeating for the general benefit that capital story

which he told his companion just before his carriage stopped, its last smile still playing round lips too solid for austerity? The Lord Bishop of Bamborough, our own prop, stay, and comfort in matters spiritual, regards his Roman Catholic Brother-Father (is that quite a correct way of putting the relationship?) with eyes of distrust, as if he feared to be converted on the spot by some Papistic trick and so be disgraced for ever. The Rev. Cyprian Chancel, who is about to suffer martyrdom through the new Act. He has prepared his face already, walks with his head on one side and his hands up, like a figure out of a church window, and looks as if he was about to go straight to a red-hot fire and blaze cheerfully, though slowly, round an iron stake. "I remember when they plucked Chancel at Cambridge for classical honours," whispers a voice at my right. His Reverence hears the remark and he winces. Touch a ritualist on the subject of intellectual distinction, and you revive many old griefs of pluckings sore, which many times he bore, and a lowly degree taken ignobly among the common herd. This is a sad memory for one who has become a leader of—women, old and young. Mr. Gabriel Cassilis. The figure seems familiar to me. He is tall and rather bent; he carries a gold *pince-nez*, with which he taps his knuckles. The great financier, said to be worth, in the delightful metaphor of the last century, a couple of Plums at least. Happy Gabriel Cassilis! Was there not some talk about his wife and a man named Lawrence Colquhoun? To be sure there was; and she married the old man after all, and now Lawrence has come back again to London. Wonder if there will be any scandal? Who is that with him? Mr. Gilead P. Beck—— hush—sh—sh! thin tall man, with lanky legs, shrewd face, full of curiosity. Lucky American who struck "ile" in Canada: owner of Petroleaville: said to be worth a thousand pounds a day: goes where he likes: does what he likes: might marry whom he likes: some nonsense about selling himself to the devil for a lucky butterfly. What a thing—of course without the bargain with the Evil One, which no well-regulated mind would

approve of or consent to—to have a thousand pounds a day! If nothing else, it makes a man a law unto himself: he can do what he likes. Wonder why it can't do away with the laws of nature? With a thousand pounds a day, a man ought to be able to live, in youth and vigour, till he grew quite tired of things and became ready to revisit the dead and gone generations of his early centuries. Think how delightful it must have been for Methuselah to see again in the Champs Elysées the friends of his youth, remembered after so many hundred years. Even Old Parr must have had some such strange welcoming of long-forgotten friends and playmates who had been turned into dust, ere he began to feel old. Three hundred and sixty-five thousand pounds a year! And all got out of "ile," you said? Dear, dear! Really, the atmosphere of this Hall is Celestial—Olympian. We are among pinnacles—Alps—of Greatness.

A buzz of expectation: a whispering among the guests: a murmur which at the slightest provocation would turn into applause and shouts of acclamation: a craning forward of necks: a standing up on tip-toe of short-legged guests in the background; a putting up of eye-glasses. Hush! here he comes.

Sir Jacob Escomb.

The Master and the Wardens bow low: lower than when they received the Secretary of State for Internal Navigation; lower than for the Ambassador of Two Eagle Land: lower than for him of El Dorado: a great deal lower than for any bishop or clergyman: lower even than to that light and glory of the earth, the successful striker of Canadian "ile."

Sir Jacob Escomb!

He is a man of a commanding presence, tall, portly, dignified in bearing; he is about fifty-five years of age, a time when dignity is at its best; he has a large head, held a little back: hair still abundant, though streaked with grey; a big and prominent nose, great lips, and a long square chin. His eyes, you might say, did you not know him to be such a good man, are rather hard. Altogether it is the face of a

successful man, and of a man who knows how to get on in the world. The secret of that man is the secret which that other philanthropist, Voltaire, discovered pretty early in life and published for the benefit of humanity—it is that some men are anvils and some hammers, that it is better to be a hammer than an anvil; or, leaving the metaphorical method, that those who make money cannot pile it up fast unless they make it out of the labours of other men.

Sir Jacob knows everybody of any distinction. He shakes hands not only with the Bishop of Bamborough, but also with him of Kensington: he is acquainted with Mr. Cassilis and already knows Mr. Gilead P. Beck. Sir John Sells, Sir Solomon Goldbeater, Sir Samuel Ingot, the Indian prince, Ek Rupiya Dao, and the Rajah Jeldee Ag Lao, are all known to him, and the clergy are to a man reckoned as his private and intimate friends. Therefore, for the brief space which remains before dinner is announced there is a general press to shake hands with this greatest of great men. Those who cannot do so feel small, I am one of the small.

Dinner! Welcome announcement.

I am placed at the lower end of the hall, the end where those sit who have least money. Sir Jacob, naturally, is near the Master. In the open space between the two ends of the great horse-shoe table is a piano—a Grand, of course. In the corner of the hall separated from Us, the aristocratic diners, is a screen behind which you may hear, perhaps, the sounds of more plates and the voices of other guests. They are, in fact, the four singers and the pianoforte-player, who are after dinner to give us a small selection of ballad and glee music (printed for us in a little book in green and gold) between the speeches. They dine at the same time as ourselves, that is allowed; but not, if you please, in our sight. We all draw the line somewhere. In the City the line is drawn at professional musicians, people who play and sing for hire.

Grace, with a gratitude almost unctuous, from the chaplain.

Turtle, with punch. My next-door neighbour is a thin,

tall man. From his general appearance, which suggests insatiable hunger, I am convinced that he is going to make a noble, an Enormous dinner. He does. He begins magnificently with three plates of turtle soup one after the other, and three glasses of iced punch. He has eaten and drunk enough at the very commencement of his dinner to keep an English labourer going the whole of one day, an Italian for two days, a Syrian for an entire week. What a great country this is where the power of eating expands with the means of procuring food! After the third plate of turtle he turns to me, and begins talking about Sir Jacob Escomb. "There is a man, sir," he says, "of whom we have reason to be proud. Don't talk to me of your lords—hereditary legislators: your bishops—ah! backstairs influence: and your foreign counts and excellencies—counts and excellencies! A beggarly lot at home, no doubt. Our great men, sir, the backbone of wealthy England, are such men as Sir Jacob Escomb. Self-made, practical, with an eye always open for the main chance, full of energy, the director of a dozen different concerns."

"What are they, then?" I asked in my innocence, for though I had heard of this man, I knew not what soldiers call "his record."

"He is an ironmaster at Dolmen-in-Ravendale, he has the principal share in a coal-mine, he has a great office in the City, he is a gigantic contractor, he has built railways over half Europe."

"Pardon," said a foreigner opposite; "you are speaking of Sir Jacob Escomb? Would you point him out to me, this great man?"

We indicate the distinguished Englishman with not unnatural pride in our country. "A—ha!" said the foreigner, putting up his glasses. "That is the Sir Jacob Escomb who made our railways for us. *C'est très remarquable.*"

"Good railways, sir, no doubt," said the thin man. "You were very glad, I suppose, to get the great Sir Jacob?"

"Good? I do not know." The foreigner shrugged his shoulders. "They carry our troops, which was what we

wanted. The cost was not many millions above the contract price. We borrowed all the millions for those railways from England. It is good of England to lend the world money to help carry troops, very good. I am glad to have seen this man—great in England."

"And with all his wealth," the thin man went on, helping himself largely to salmon, "such a good man!" He shook his head with an expression of envy. Who could aspire to so much goodness? It was more than one man's share.

I got no more conversation out of that thin man, because for two hours and a half he continued to eat steadily, which gave him no time for talk. And to drink! Let us do him justice. He drank with as much zeal as he ate, and with equal impartiality put down champagne—the Hammerers' champagne is not too dry—sauterne, chablis, madeira, hock, and sherry—they gave us manzanilla. A glass of port with the cheese—the port at the Hammerers' is generous and fruity. More port with the dessert: claret after that. Then more claret. He was indeed a truly zealous defender of City privileges, and ate and drank enough for twenty. I thought of poor old Ebenezer Grumbelow (whose history I have already narrated elsewhere), and how he would have envied this great and splendid appetite.

Presently the end of dinner actually arrived. Then the harmonious Four came out from behind their screen, having also well eaten and much drunken, and began to tootle, and we all talked together. The thin man on my left looked much thinner after his enormous dinner than before. This is a physiological peculiarity with thin men which has never been explained. Fat men expand with dinner. Thin men contract. He seized a decanter of port, and with a big bunch of grapes, settled down to quiet enjoyment. The foreign person with the eye-glasses looked about him and asked who the illustrious guests were and what each had done.

"The Queen." There is no doubt about the Hammerers' loyalty. We are ready to die for our sovereign to a man.

The harmonious Four chant "God save the Queen."

"The Army and the Navy." There is no doubt about the efficiency of both, because both the General who has commanded an army, and the Admiral who has hoisted his flag in the Mediterranean, both say so, and we receive their assurances with acclamation. "But your army is so very small," urges the person of foreign extraction, "and as for your fleet—why there are torpedoes. When you can put 500,000 men into the field we shall begin to be a little afraid of you again. But, pardon me, nobody is afraid of England's little toy which she calls an army." Very odd that some foreign persons think so much of large armies and have such small belief in money.

"Her Majesty's Government." Cabinet Minister—Secretary of State for Internal Navigation—in reply, assures us that all is going on perfectly with the best of all possible Governments. Never anybody so able as the Chief, never any man so adroit as the Foreign Office man, never anything managed with such diplomatic skill as the Eastern Question. War, unfortunately, could not be prevented, but we are out of it—so far. British interests will be maintained with a strong hand. Of that we may be quite sure. Meantime, we are preparing for the worst. Should the worst occur, which Heaven forbid!—he is perhaps revealing a State secret, but he may tell us that the forces are to be strengthened by five hundred men, and two new gunboats are now upon the stocks. (Rapturous applause.) We hammer the table, sure of our country. Says the foreign person, "The British interests mean, I think, whatever you can get people to give you without going to war. How long will you keep what you have got unless you fight for them. Two gunboats. Bah! Five hundred men. Bah!" The odd thing about foreigners is that they never appreciate the British belief in the honesty and generosity of their neighbours. That comes of being too civilised, perhaps. Other nations have to be educated up to the English level.

"Our illustrious guest, the Ambassador for Two Eagle Land." Nothing, it appears, is more certain than the firm friendship which exists between England and the illustrious

guest's own country. That is most reassuring. "Friendship between two nations," says the absurd foreign critic opposite me, whose name is surely Machiavelli, "means that neither thinks itself strong enough to crush the other. You English," he goes on, "will always continue to be the friend of everybody, so long as you kindly submit everything to arbitration, because the arbitrators will always decide against you." It is very disagreeable, after dinner too, to hear such things spoken of one's country.

The musicians give us, "All among the Barley."

"The Church." The Bishop of Kensington bows courteously to him of Bamborough, as to an enemy whom one respects. The Bishop of Bamborough assures us of the surprising increase in the national love for the Church of England. We are overjoyed. This is a facer for Monseigneur of Kensington. Foreign person listens admiringly. "He is what you call 'Ritualist?'" he asks. "No; he is Evangelical." Ah! he does not understand these little distinctions. The Church does not interest him.

"The Industries of England." Applause is rapturous, when Sir Jacob Escomb slowly rises to reply, and solemnly looks round the hall.

"So rich a man," says my friend on the left, who has eaten his grapes, cleared off a plateful of early peaches, and is now tackling a dish of strawberries with his second decanter of port. He is thinner than ever. "So rich: and such a good man!"

"England," begins Sir Jacob, after a preamble of modesty, "is deservedly proud, not only of her industries, but also, if I, an employer of labour, be permitted to say so, of the men who have built up the edifice of British wealth. . . . And if this is so, what, I ask, is England's duty? To civilise, by means of that wealth; to use that gold in doing GOOD." (Hear, hear!) "And how can the rich men of England do GOOD?" He lays tremendous emphasis on the word *good*, so much emphasis that it must be printed in capitals. "Are they, for instance, to go up and down the lanes and byways seeking for fit objects of relief? No. That, my lords and

gentlemen, were to make an ironclad do the work of the captain's gig. Their business is, as I take it—to distribute cheques. Are people, anywhere, in suffering? Send a cheque. Are soldiers lying wounded on a field of battle? Shall we go to war with the lying and hypocritical Power which has caused the war, and prevent, if we can, a recurrence of the wickedness? No; that is not the mission of England. Send a cheque. Is a society started for the Advancement of Humanity? I am glad to say that such a society is about to start, as I read in the papers, for I have not myself any personal connection as yet with it, under the presidency of that distinguished philanthropist, Lord Addlehede, whom I am proud to call my friend,—send a cheque. The actual work of charity, philanthropy, and general civilisation is carried out for us, by proper officers, by the army of paid workmen, the secretaries, the curates, the surgeons, and such people. The man of wealth directs. Like the general, he does not lead the troops himself; he sends them into battle. I go even farther," Sir Jacob leans forward very solemnly, "I say that the actual sight of suffering, disease, poverty, sorrow, brutality, wickedness, hunger, dirt, want of civilisation generally, is revolting—simply revolting—to the man of wealth. His position must, and should, secure him from unpleasant sights. Let him hear of them; and let him alleviate—it is his mission and his privilege—by means of his cheque."

There is so much benevolence in this assemblage that Sir Jacob's philanthropic speech is loudly applauded. Only the dreadful foreign person lifts his hands and shakes his head.

"By his cheque!" he repeats in admiration. "He will advance humanity—by his cheque. He will prevent wars—by his cheque. He will make us all good—by his cheque. He will convert nations—by his cheque. He will reconcile parties—by his cheque. He will make the priest love the Voltairean—by his cheque. *Enfin*, he will go to heaven—by his cheque. He is very great, Sir Jacob Escomb—a very, very great man."

"Sir," said the thin man on my left, who had now entered into the full enjoyment of his third decanter—this wine is really very generous and fruity, as I said before—probably wine of fifty-one—"he is more than great. There is no philanthropic, religious, or benevolent movement which is complete without Sir Jacob's name. There are many Englishmen of whom we are proud, because they have made so much money; but there is none of whom it may be said, as is said of Sir Jacob, not only that he is so rich, but that he is SUCH a good man."

CHAPTER II.

GLORY AND GREATNESS.

THE breakfast-room of Sir Jacob Escomb's town-house, one of the great houses on Campden Hill which stand in their own gardens, set about with trees, like houses a hundred miles away from the city, was a large and cheerful apartment, whose windows had a south aspect, while a conservatory on the east side intercepted the wind from that hateful quarter. It was furnished, like the whole of the house with solidity. No new-fashioned gewgaws littered the rooms in Sir Jacob's house; nor did pseudo-antique rubbish carry the imagination back to the straight-backed times of Queen Anne. There were heavy carpets, heavy chairs, heavy tables, very heavy pictures of game and fruit, a massive mirror in an immense and richly-chased gold frame, and a sideboard which looked like one mass of solid mahogany, built up out of a giant trunk cut down in the forests of that Republican synonym for financial solidity and moral strength, Honduras.

Although the furniture is heavy, the sunshine of May—actually a fine day in May, without any east wind—streaming through the windows, the bright colours of painted glass and exotic flowers dazzling enough to be painted too, the small clear fire in the grate, and the white breakfast-cloth, make the room cheerful by itself. It would be cheerful,

you feel, even if it were weighted by the presence, the solitary presence, of the great Sir Jacob himself, portly, important, self-sufficient.

It is nine o'clock in the morning, and there are already two in the breakfast room, Julian Carteret, Sir Jacob's ward, and Rose Escomb, Sir Jacob's niece. Stay; not two people; only one, as yet. Only Julian Carteret, reading the paper at one of the three windows.

There were once two Escomb brothers. The name of the elder was Jacob, that of the younger Peter. They were the children of a factory hand; they were put into the mill as soon as they could be of any use. They were, by some accident, a little better educated than most of the children round them. There was not much book-learning for them, to be sure, but they learned something; perhaps their father was a man with ambitious tendencies, whose development was checked by drink; perhaps they had a mother who cared for her boys beyond the care of most Lancashire factory women; this point in the history of the two Escombs is obscure, and has never been cleared up by any voluntary revelations on the part of Sir Jacob. "I have made my own way in the world," he is not ashamed to own. "I began with nothing, not even a good education. My father was a poor man; my grandfather and all before him are unknown to me." That was the general confession which any Christian might make. To go into particular confession, to poke about in one's memory for the details of forgotten poverty, the squalid house, one of a row of wretched red brick monotonous houses; the evenings, when the men were in drink and the women all speaking together on the curb-stone, in that Shrew's Parliament, or Virago's Convention, which met on every fine evening; the days in the factory, where

> All day, the wheels are droning,
> Their wind comes in our faces,
> Till our hearts turn—our heads with pulses burning,
> And the walls turn in their places.

The absence of education, the rough words, rough food, harsh treatment—it is not pleasant even for a wealthy and respected baronet to recall these things. Therefore, and not, I believe, with any desire to hide his former poverty and its depths, which indeed only enhanced his present greatness, Sir Jacob did not go into details when he spoke of his childhood.

The most important thing about their education was, they both learned a lesson which our boys are more and more in all classes of society learning. Forty or fifty years ago it was not even understood. Consider the importance of it. It was the great, the precious, the never-to-be-sufficiently-impressed-upon-a-child Duty of Discontent. That the present position was a hard one; that it might be improved; that in this fair realm of England there is a career open to every one provided he is discontented with his lot—that was the lesson which the two brothers learned. It stimulated one to study, to work, to invention, to enterprise as he grew older: it only fell upon the other like a dull clog round his neck, making him uneasy under his burdens, and unable to shake them off. In a word, the elder, Jacob, advanced in life; the younger, Peter, save that he became a foreman, remained where he was. That is generally the way with things: the same teaching produces entirely different effects. What made Jacob rich, only made his brother unhappy.

Both brothers married. Peter led to the altar a woman in the same station of life of himself. He imparted to her his grand secret of discontent, and they both lived in great unhappiness together for twenty years. They had several children, but what with bad smells and bad milk the infants all died except one, a girl, whom they named Rose. Rose was a bright healthy girl, who at thirteen or so was rather a hoyden, which mattered little in those circles; fond of playing with John Gower, who was two or three years older than herself, whenever John could find time to play with her; not plagued with much learning, but sharp and clever. Before she was fourteen, something—say those bad smells

—carried off both her parents, besides a whole batch of friends. In fact, half the street migrated to the other world as if with one consent. Those smells were really too overpowering. Anything was better than a continuation of such a nuisance; so they all went away, leaving their children, husbands, wives, and friends behind. Old and young went away together. Among those who stayed behind was little Rose Escomb, whose uncle, the grand and prosperous Jacob, sent for her to be educated under his own superintendence, and to be adopted by him. Jacob, now exalted to the rank of baronet, married a good deal later than his brother Peter. In fact, it was not till he was past forty that he began to think of the step at all. He was already a wealthy and well-considered man, with plenty of that Discontent hanging about him still. He chose his wife for prudential rather than for amatory considerations. He found a certain widow with a property, all her own, of thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. She was his own age, of good family connections, of good temper, with an extremely high opinion of herself, and with excellent manners: just the woman to put at the head of his table. The money was all settled upon herself.

Lady Escomb took a great fancy to her niece, this half wild uneducated girl from Lancashire. She sent her to school, the best school she could find. She was kind to her in the vacations; and had the good sense when she died, which unhappy event took place a year or two before the time of my story (that is, about the year 1874), to leave all her money to Rose, on the sole condition that she married with the consent of Sir Jacob. If she failed to keep that condition, the thirty thousand pounds were all to go back to her husband.

All this brings me back to the breakfast-room on Campden Hill, and we will take the opportunity, Julian Carteret being there alone, of looking at him.

A strong face, you would say; a face with regular features and those not weak, clear-cut nostrils, square forehead, firm lips, and a square chin, which is perhaps a little too long;

the hair curly and short, after the fashion of the time, a heavy moustache and shaven chin, with short, square whiskers; dressed in the regulation style, which is that of the last year of grace, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-six. A good-natured face, too, brimming over with peace and contentment, and just now full of *malice*, which is French for fun, because the owner hears steps in the room, and knows whose the steps are, and waits for what acrostic readers call more light, that is to say, for information of what the owner of the steps has done, where she has been, and what she thinks about things in general. The steps are, in fact, those of Rose. She wears a riding-habit, because she has just returned from her early ride in the Park. A pretty girl, a very pretty girl indeed; a girl calculated to make the hearts of young men to dance, and the pulses of fogies to quicken; a girl of nineteen, the age when womanhood and girlhood meet and one feels the charms of both; the innocence and freshness of the one, with the assurance and self-reliance of the other.

It is Rose Escomb's second season. I do not know what hearts she broke in her first campaign, but I do know that she came out of it scatheless herself. Perhaps Julian Carteret, who went through it with her, knows the secret of her escape. Not that they are lovers; not at all; but they have been a good deal together for the last year and a half or thereabouts. Julian belongs to the house, in a way; it is a great thing for him to sleep in the house when he pleases, to dine there if he pleases, to feel that luncheon is spread for him as well as for Rose and Mrs. Sampson, who is Rose's chaperon in ordinary; also, it is not unpleasant to feel a kind of protectorate over the girl, acquired by this constant companionship. But in love? Rose would be the first to laugh at such a notion; to laugh first, and to become a little thoughtful afterwards, because, when you come really to think of it, Julian is very nice, much nicer and cleverer than most young men. But then Julian is—well, nobody at Campden Hill even looks on Julian Carteret as a marrying man. He is Sir Jacob's ward, too; and it matters nothing,

of course, to Rose whether he marries or whether he does not.

Julian became Sir Jacob's ward through a second-cousinship, or something of that kind, with Lady Escomb. He is, like Rose, an orphan, and Sir Jacob is his guardian and sole trustee. By the terms of an uncle's will he has an allowance of five hundred pounds a year until his twenty-fifth birthday, when he is to come into full possession of the very handsome fortune of seventy thousand pounds which his father was good enough to save up for him. The extension of the period of wardship until five-and-twenty is explained in the will. "And whereas it is my desire that my nephew and heir, Julian Carteret, shall not have the excuse of extreme youth to plead should he waste his patrimony in debauchery or folly, and because I hope that he will use the four years between twenty-one and twenty-five in the acquisition of sound and useful knowledge, in gaining experience and prudence, and in laying down a plan for the future conduct of his life, I will that his fortune should be held in trust for him by Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet, and shall not be handed over to him until the day when he arrives at his twenty-fifth birthday. And until that date he shall receive the sum of five hundred pounds a year, paid quarterly, from the said Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet."

As a student, perhaps, Julian Carteret has not been an unqualified success. He went through Cambridge quietly and without any kind of distinction: he was called to the Bar two years after taking his degree, but he did not propose to practise, and had but a limited acquaintance with the English law: he had travelled a good deal: he had a great many friends, and very few enemies, which is the general rule with good-natured men: his aims, if he had any, lay in the direction of personal ease and comfort: he abhorred trouble or worry: he despised benevolence as he saw it in Sir Jacob Escomb: and he would fain have lived in a land where there were no poor people, no noisy people, no canting people, no active people: where the servants should move

noiselessly: where there should be plenty of Art accessible: and where he could set up his lathe and work quietly. For the one thing this young man cared for in the way of work was mechanism. He was a born mechanic. Reuben Gower, Sir Jacob's secretary, often compared his hand, which was broad and strong, with his own. Both, he said, were the hands of mechanics. And he could do cunning things with his lathe.

Rose sees him sitting in the window, and steals softly so that he shall not see her—but he does see her, or rather feels that she is in the room and near him—and throws her handkerchief over his eyes. "I know that is Rose," says Julian lazily, behind the handkerchief. "No one but Rose could have the impudence to blind my eyes."

"Tell me, blindfold, what you have been reading," says Rose. "Repeat the leading article by heart."

"That is very easy, because, in this paper, it is always the same thing. England is to be swallowed up by the Russians first, the Germans next, the French afterwards. What little remains of us will be taken by the Japanese."

"That is rubbish," said Rose, taking the handkerchief from his eyes. "Do you like this rose? I just picked it in the conservatory."

"The manliness is gone out of Englishmen," Julian went on in a sing-song tone, "the honesty out of English merchants, the enterprise out of English brains, the fair day's work for a good day's pay can no longer be got out of English workmen, and—ah! this is more dreadful than anything else—the beauty of English girls is a thing of the past."

"I wonder if it pays to write that kind of thing?" said Rose; "because, you know, it is too desperately silly. And yet some people must believe it; otherwise, I suppose, the very clever men who write for newspapers would not have written it. Tell me, sir, is the beauty gone away from —me?"

There was no need to reply. If there was any exception wanted by which to prove the rule of the pessimist paper,

Rose Escomb would have furnished that exception. She has thrown off her hat, and her light hair, blue eyes, sunny face, and slender figure are well set off by the black riding habit, which becomes her so well. In her hand she carries a rose-bud, which she is "trying on" in her hair, at her neck, in her waist, wherever a girl can stick a rose.

Julian rises slowly—he is a very lazy young man—and surveys his guardian's niece with indolent gratification. Perhaps if he did not see her every day there might be a little more vivacity in his tone—

"For a picture, Rose," he says, "for a single picture of a young lady, I don't know where to find a better study than you. You would do for one of those things which they sell in shops—young lady—you know—coloured photograph. You might be tapping at a door with a letter in your hand; or standing on a chair, with gracefully trailing skirt, to feed a bird; or musing in a garden, also with a letter in your hand—'Yes, or no?' or in a field, blowing off the petals of a daisy—'Is it he?' or in any of the attitudes which you see in the shop-windows. A girl might win fainter praise than that, Rose. You would look well in a picture, but I like you out of a picture best."

"Thank you for so much," said Rose. "How is it you are up so early, Lazy Lawrence?"

"Woke," he replied, with a faint yawn. "Remembered, all of a sudden, that you would be going for your morning canter; thought I would go too—sunny day—breezy in the Park—freshen a man; got up—came down. Thought better of it when I was down—thought of the fatigue. Been reading the paper instead."

"You are really a Lazy Lawrence. What are you going to do all day—sit on the sofa and think about what the paper says?"

"Fulfil the condition of my uncle's will," he replied solemnly—"I am going to study."

She laughed.

"His uncle gives him all his fortune on the condition that he studies till he is five-and-twenty."

"And he does study."

"In order that he may choose his career at a comparatively mature age."

"He has chosen his career," says Julian, sitting down again.

"Have you really, Julian?" She is surprised by the announcement. "What is it? Are you going to be a great statesman, I wonder, or a great lawyer, or a great—no, you can't be a great theologian!"

"No," said Julian, "no; I do not think I shall be a great theologian."

"A great philanthropist, perhaps, like——"

"Like your uncle, Sir Jacob? No, no; I hardly think I should look well on a platform spouting to the waxy faces of Exeter Hall. Why are good people always wax-and-putty-faced? You shall guess my career, Rose."

"I cannot, Julian. Give it me by weekly instalments in double acrostics, with a prize at the end of the quarter, and a big dictionary to guess the words with, and I will try."

"Listen, then; maiden, hear my tale." Julian sat as dramatically as the position allows. "I was to prolong my studies till twenty-five. It wants three weeks to my twenty-fifth birthday—you know how hard I have studied—then I come into my fortune—which does not look, by the way, nearly so big now as it did when one was further off—and I choose my career."

"What studies!" laughed Rose. "O wicked pretender!"

"My uncle did not specify my studies, so I chose them to please myself. From eighteen to twenty-one I studied at Cambridge: there I learned how men look at things, and how they talk about them; also I learned how to play whist, racquets, tennis, and loo—all athletic and valuable games; learned to row—a most useful accomplishment; learned to bet—a safeguard against rogues and turf-sharpers; and forgot what I had learned at school, down to examination-point

—that was a good deal of useless information well got rid of. I also learned how to get into debt."

"Go on, most industrious of students."

"At twenty-one I came up to town. I have since learned very little, because the University of Cambridge, rightly and intelligently used, as I used it, really does, as they say, finish one's education. After three years there, I had no more to learn. But one can put into practice what one has learned. To satisfy the clauses of the will I became a law student, and have never since opened a law-book; and, to get through the time, I have been globe-trotting—all round the world in a hundred and twenty days. Now the time has come, and with it the career—the Time, the Man, and the Career."

"Well?"

"The Career, Rose, is—to do nothing—a Nothing-doer—a Waster of the golden years—an Idler by profession. Other men may become members of Parliament, and sit up all night listening to dreary talk, and for their pains get abused by the papers—not Julian Carteret; other men may waste their time writing books, and for their pains get down-cried and misrepresented by the critics—not Julian Carteret; other men may wade through dull law books and wrangle in courts of law, and for their pains scrape money together to spend after the time of enjoyment has gone by—not Julian Carteret; others may work and pile up money in trade for their children to spend—not Julian Carteret. And then, there is the new profession—that of the man who goes about doing good——"

"Julian, you must not sneer at philanthropy."

"Doing good: standing on a platform to talk; getting up after dinner to talk; giving money and supporting societies; mixing with the snuffy women who want to "hel-lup," as they call it; talking their cant with the broken-down adventurers who live on the charitable world; content to enjoy such a reputation as that kind of thing can give—pah! the unreality of it, my dear Rose, the unreality of it!"

"But there are exceptions, Julian—my uncle, for instance——"

"Oh, your uncle, of course." Julian laughs a little short laugh. "Everybody knows what a good man he is. But I cannot follow him even at a distance. No, Rose; my career will be, to do good to myself alone. I shall have a town house—not a very big one—one of the houses, say, in Chester Square; and I shall go away every winter to Sicily, to Southern Italy, to some of the places where there is no winter, but, instead, a season where the sun is only pleasantly warm and the flowers are sweetest. There I shall live undisturbed by cackle, cant, or care, amid such art as I can afford, and such artistic people as one can get together, and so by their help gather from every hour its one supreme rapture. I shall live for pleasure, Rose; all the rest is a flam—a humbug—a windbag—whatever you like."

"Julian, that is a selfish life. You must not forget the duties. I won't say anything about doing good, Julian, if you dislike the phrase; but there are the poor, whom we have always with us."

"Yes," he replied irreverently, "that is just what I dislike. The poor! They belong to a different world: *they* work, *we* play; they wake up tired and go to bed more tired, we wake up refreshed and go to bed happy; they toil for their masters, we neither toil nor spin. We are like the lilies of the field. There is but one life in this world for all of us, rich or poor. Make the most of it: you who are rich, get what you can out of every moment; let there be no single day unremembered for lack of its distinctive joy; keep your heart shut to the suffering which you do not see and did not cause; never think of the future——"

"O Julian," Rose interrupted him, "is that the creed of a Christian?"

Julian shrugged his shoulders.

"*Je suis philosophe*," he said. "Well—but there is one thing wanting in my life, Rose. I have planned it all out, and I find that it won't do without one little alteration. You see, Rose—you see—you see, it never does do to live

alone—not good for man, as you have often read—and I want, to complete the ideal life—a partner!"

Rose was startled.

"I must go and take off my riding-habit," she said.

"Not for a moment, dear Rose. How long have you been staying with your uncle? Six years since you came here—wild-eyed, timid Lancashire lass of fourteen; and since your last home-coming from school a year and a half. We have been together, you and I, pretty well all that time. Do you think you know me well enough, Rose—well enough for me to put one more question to you?"

She was silent and he took her hand.

"One more question, dear Rose. You know what it is going to be. Could you be my partner in that ideal life?"

She hesitated; then she looked at him with frank, clear eyes, which went straight to his heart.

"Julian, I *could* not live that life that you have sketched—a life without either sympathy or duty."

"You would not be happy with me—and with love? Speak, dear; tell me the truth."

"I should be—O Julian!"—he drew her gently to himself, and her head fell upon his breast—"I should be too happy; I should forget the people from whom I sprang. You know who my father was, Julian—a poor mill-hand once, and never more than a foreman. I belong to the poor: I must do what I can for my own class. I am only a jay dressed in borrowed plumes—only half a lady."

"Is that all, dear Rose? You are afraid of the ideal life? Why, you could never, never go back to the old Lancashire days; you have grown out of them; you no more belong to the people now than I do."

"But still I am afraid of your ideal life—all enjoyment."

"Then I give up my ideal life. Let it all go—art, pictures, sunny slopes of Sicily, vineyards, villagers dancing, flowers, and *contadine*. Rose and love are worth them all. We will live in England if you like, even through the east wind, and I will give you a cheque for your poor people every day.

That is what Sir Jacob says is the only way to practice charity. See, here is his speech at the dinner last night of the Hammerers' Company, with a leading article on the subject."

But she shook her head.

"You may give them money, and ruin their self-respect. What you must give them, if you want to help them, is—yourself."

"Dear Rose! I will even do that, if you will give—yourself—to me."

She made no reply, but she made no resistance when he drew her closer and touched her face with his lips.

Then he let her go, and they started asunder guiltily.

Ten o'clock strikes as a big footman brings in breakfast. They are not early people at this town-house, but they are punctual. At a quarter to ten, prayers, read by Sir Jacob to all the household; at ten, breakfast.

Steps outside. Lovers like a peaceful solitude. When they hear steps they start asunder, like a couple of spooning turtle-doves.

Ten o'clock is striking as a footman brings in breakfast. He is a very big footman, and of majestic deportment. We are not early people at Sir Jacob Escomb's, because there is so much to do at night that we get to bed, as a rule, late. But we are punctual. Prayers at a quarter to ten, conducted by the chief, no other; breakfast at ten.

Perhaps, when Charles Plush, the big and solemn footman, opened the door, he saw something which awakened his suspicions; perhaps it was an accident. In either case, the fact remains that the fall and smash of a cup and saucer caused that couple to separate hastily. Rose thought she had been discovered, when Charles opened the door, arranging flowers in a vase; Julian, that he had been found reading the morning paper. The best of us are but purblind mortals.

In a certain hotel in a certain watering-place, whither newly-engaged and newly-married couples do much resort, and where, such is the contagion of the atmosphere, people

often get engaged, it is said that the waiters have strict orders *always, and without any exception whatever*, to announce their presence outside the door, and before opening it, by dropping a plate. It is a thoughtful rule, and has saved many a blush to the cheek of the young person. Perhaps Charles had been a waiter at that establishment. If not, the expedient did equal credit to his head and to his heart. The damage done to the crockery in the hotel of which I speak is always charged in the bill, and no objection has ever been raised to the item, except once, by a Scotchman, who was dining with an aged aunt. He paid it, however, after grumbling, with the remark that it was "just too re-deeculous."

Breakfast brought in, Sir Jacob and Mrs. Sampson followed.

"Not at prayers, Rose," says the good man severely, as she salutes him.

"Not at prayers, my love?" echoes Mrs. Sampson, her companion and chaperon.

"No, uncle, I came in from my ride, found Julian here, and did not know it was so late."

"Good morning, Julian. You, too, might have remembered the hour for family worship."

Julian said nothing.

Sir Jacob looked through the papers during breakfast often, to see whether his own speeches were properly reported. This morning he was gratified in finding his remarks at the Hammerers' dinner reported in full, with a leading article on "English Benevolence." There were no debates, and the columns were open to philanthropic outpourings, to correspondence, and to general palaver. The papers despatched, he turned to the letters, of which a pile of thirty or forty lay at his elbow. Those which related to business he laid aside, to be taken into the City; those which were concerned with the "doing of good,' he kept before him, and read one by one, with verbal comments.

"We take holiday, Mrs. Sampson," he says—"thank you,

a slice of toast—but the good work never ceases. Always demands for money—money—money. Lady Smallbeer, her Nursing Institute. General Screwloose, his Home for the Healthy. A lady once in easy circumstances, a new church, new organ for old church, surplices for choristers, Pensions for Evangelical Parish Clerks' Society, the Beadles' Benevolent Building Society, Protest of the Aborigines Protection Act against the thrashing of a Fantee by a sergeant during the late Ashantee War——. Well, well, these are the daily letters of a philanthropist. The luxury of doing good is tempered by its labours. I have a platform at twelve, a luncheon at two, a committee at four, a dinner, unless I can get off it, at seven."

"We all know, Sir Jacob, the enormous, the incalculable claims upon the time of a public man, who is also a philanthropist."

"It is true, Mrs. Sampson," said Sir Jacob, laying his hand heavily on the table, partly, perhaps, to attract the attention of Rose and Julian, who were talking in low tones at the other side of the table, "most true, Mrs. Sampson; and yet, you would hardly believe it, madam, I was yesterday solicited to stand for Parliament."

"Nay, Sir Jacob," said Mrs. Sampson, "not the Lower House? I trust you know your own worth too well to become a member of the Commons."

The compliment went home. The Baronet bowed, because he had nothing to say, and was, indeed, too much pleased to find immediate words. He returned to his tea and toast and letters. The Lower House! The Upper House! Why not? Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet, owner, nay, creator of the great works of Dolmen, in Ravendale. Why should he not become Baron Dolmen of Ravendale? The thought was new, and for the moment bewildering. Jacob, first Baron Dolmen of Ravendale! with, unfortunately, no sons to inherit. But the title might be passed on to Rose and her husband, and their children.

He looked at Julian Carteret and smiled.

"Your speech of last night, Sir Jacob," said Mrs. Sampson,

glancing through the paper, "has given rise to much comment."

"Ay, ay; and yet a simple speech."

"There is a leading article upon it here, I see. Respectful in its tone, even if hardy, or rather, audacious, in its criticism. For the kind of thing, Sir Jacob, perhaps it might amuse you."

Mrs. Sampson spoke as if the paper which would venture to criticise Sir Jacob was presumptuous beyond expression, and as if the only right thing was for writers of leading articles to receive humbly the crumbs of wisdom which might fall from such a great man, and to go lowly, upon hands and knees, before this Golden Calf and other Golden Calves.

Sir Jacob took the paper from her, and read the article.

Mrs. Sampson, the lady who occupied the position of—not housekeeper, not matron—say, President of the Domestic Department to Sir Jacob, was a person apparently about forty years of age, young-looking for her years, with a soft voice, bright eyes, and a full, comfortable figure. She was doubly a widow, having lost two husbands, and she looked as if she was ready to imperil the life of a third. A pleasant, good-natured, happy-tempered widow. She thought, quite honestly, that Sir Jacob was the best and wisest man in all the world.

Before breakfast was finished, a card was brought to Sir Jacob.

"'Mr. Bodkin,'" he read, through his double eye-glasses; "'Mr. Theophilus Bodkin.'" He laid wondering emphasis on the Christian name.

"Henry Theophilus Bodkin, Sir Jacob," said Mrs. Sampson, with a sigh. "You have seen my old friend, Henry Bodkin—his second name is Theophilus—an admirer, from a distance, of your philanthropic devotion."

"Henry Bodkin? I believe I do remember him. Charles, I will see Mr. Bodkin here."

If any one, that morning, had been asked to describe Mr.

Bodkin, he would begin by comparing his face with that of Swift's mute, who, the more his master raised his wages, the jollier he looked. There was an enforced and compulsory gravity, battling with a strong, natural disposition to laugh and be happy, which showed that something good, something unexpected, had happened to the man. He was dressed in a suit of solemn black, of almost clerical cut, and looked a clergyman very nearly, save that he wore a black tie. He was apparently between forty and fifty; his face was clean shaven, and his hair was turning a little grey.

He made a deep bow to the philanthropist.

"Sir Jacob Escomb," he began, with a voice of great solemnity, "I have come thus early in the hope of seeing you without wasting your time." Then he saw Mrs. Sampson. "Lav——, I mean, Mrs. Sampson, I hope you are well. Miss Rose, I am your most humble servant. Mr. Carteret, I trust you, too, are in good health."

"Have you taken orders, Bodkin?" asked Julian. "The last time I saw you, I think you were——"

Mr. Bodkin waved his hand with a deprecatory gesture.

"Never mind the last time, Mr. Carteret; we must not waste Sir Jacob's moments. He is not interested in the circumstances of that interview."

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Sampson. "Let me give you another cup of tea, Sir Jacob."

"I come here, Sir Jacob," Mr. Bodkin began again, "as a delegate. I am, in fact, commissioned by Lord Addlehede —you know his lordship?"

"Surely; we all know that excellent nobleman."

"He is the President of our new society—my new society," he looked at Mrs. Sampson with something like a wink, "for the General Advancement of Humanity. Of this noble society I have the honour to be the secretary. Lord Addlehede came to the office early this morning—in fact, before canonical—I mean, office hours. Fortunately, I was there. He held in his hand, Sir Jacob, a copy of this morning's paper, in which is reported your speech at the Hammerers' Company."

"Ay, Ay?" asked Sir Jacob. "Yes; they are reported. And yet my words were hardly intended to go beyond the circle of their hearers."

"Sir Jacob's words," murmured Mrs. Sampson, "are too precious to be lightly heard and tossed away. They must be treasured up."

"You are very good to say so, Mrs. Sampson. Pray go on, Mr Bodkin. Will you not take a chair?"

"Thank you, Sir Jacob. As a Delegate or Deputation, it is perhaps more fitting that I should stand. Lord Addlehede called my attention to the startling fact that you had actually alluded to the newly-formed Society. 'You must instantly, Bodkin,' said his lordship, 'secure Sir Jacob. Go to him with my compliments. Catch him before he starts for the City. He must be had before we move a step further.' So, Sir Jacob, I am here——"

"Yes," Sir Jacob spoke slowly. "To give the weight of my name, if indeed it has any weight"—here he smiled, while Mrs. Sampson and Mr. Bodkin murmured. Julian and Rose, breakfast finished, were standing among the flowers in the conservatory—"since, then, it *has* some weight, is a serious and even a solemn thing. You propose a Society for the General Advance of Humanity—an advance along the whole line, I suppose. But you will have to select points at which to commence."

"Lord Addlehede has suggested the British Cabman. We are to begin the improvement of humanity by improving the cabman."

"Yes." Sir Jacob still spoke thoughtfully. "Who are on your committee?"

"At present, Lord Addlehede only; but here is the general prospectus, with a few suggested names." Mr. Bodkin drew a paper out of a well-stuffed pocket-book.

"Yes—yes. The Bishop of Cackle and Mull—a good man. Sir Chirpington Babble, a sound speaker. The Hon. Gushington Gatheral—I have frequently stood on the same platform with Mr. Gatheral. Major Borington—I think you have made a mistake here, Mr. Bodkin," said Sir Jacob.

"Major Borington is a man who uses, I fear, philanthropy for purposes of self-advancement. He has pushed himself into a—a certain kind of notoriety by platform oratory."

"Indeed, Sir Jacob—really—had Lord Addlehede only known it. But it is not yet too late. The Major has not been formally invited. Lord Addlehede thought he was a leader among the philanthropic world."

"It is not too late," said Sir Jacob thoughtfully. "There are many men, I am afraid, like Major Borington, who climb the ladder of reputation by an assumption of benevolence."

"Surely, Sir Jacob," Mrs. Sampson expostulated, "there cannot exist such men. Pray take another cup of tea."

"Ladies, madam, are not versed, naturally, in the arts of ambitious men." He spoke as if his own reputation for philanthropy were founded on a solid and disinterested basis quite beyond suspicion of selfish ends. "However—about the management of the Society, Mr. Bodkin."

"We have secured a first-floor in a commanding position in Queen Victoria Street. Lord Addlehede has signed the agreement. We have furnished out two rooms solidly. Lord Addlehede has bought the furniture. We have had our brass plate put up at the door. Our prospectus is in the press. We begin with a hundred thousand, and keep the type standing: and while I am here five-and-twenty girls are writing addresses for us on wrappers at sixpence a hundred."

"That looks well. And what will your own salary be?"

"I am to begin with—ahem!—with five hundred a year, paid quarterly, in advance. Lord Addlehede has advanced the first quarter's stipend."

Mr. Bodkin slapped his pocket with a cheerfulness which was undignified, but which he could not wholly subdue.

"Ah! It is moderate for an energetic man. And are there any other—advantages in the position?"

"We *have* agreed, Lord Addlehede and myself," Mr. Bodkin replied with a little hesitation, "on a commission—merely nominal—of seven and a half per cent. on all

donations. We expect very large support. It is nothing less, Sir Jacob, than an organised attempt to civilise the world. Nothing like organisation in all charitable and benevolent attempts. As you yourself said, Sir Jacob, in your admirable speech of last night, 'Let the men of wealth assist the good cause—with a cheque.' To you, no doubt, it would be revolting to witness the depths from which we propose to rescue the British cabman. You, Sir Jacob, could not be expected, as our agents will have to do, to follow the cabman from the mud of the rank to the—the mire of the mews: from the mire of the mews to—alas!—to the public-house: from the public-house to his stably home above the mews."

"Certainly not," said Sir Jacob with dignity.

"And therefore, Sir Jacob, I am deputed by Lord Addlehede to invite you to join him in forwarding the Society."

"You may put down my name, Mr. Bodkin."

"Certainly, Sir Jacob." The Secretary produced his note-book and pencil. "Certainly, Sir Jacob. For how much?"

"As one of the Vice-Presidents, Mr. Bodkin." Sir Jacob gathered up his papers. "I shall perhaps not return to dinner, Mrs. Sampson, unless I can escape my engagement. Good-morning, madam. Good-morning to you, Mr. Bodkin."

"Lavinia!" escaped from the impassioned lips of the Secretary, almost before the door was closed.

"Henry, is this real?"

"Real, Lavinia! Is this prospectus real? Is this cheque—pay to the order of Theophilus Bodkin, Esq., one hundred pounds—on Coutts & Co.—signed Addlehede—is that real? Look at the cheque. Observe the Coutts & Co.—Coutts & Co.—Coutts & Co. in small writing all over this delicious and artistic piece of paper."

"O Henry!" There was a languishing softness in Mrs. Sampson's tones which suggested bygone passages.

"You look younger, Lavinia—" Mr. Bodkin stood a little way off, looking at the lady with a critical air—"younger

than ever. There are some women who improve, like Stilton cheese, by keeping. Others, again, go off like—like beer kept standing in a mug."

"And there are some men, Henry——"

"You think so, Lavinia? Do you really think so? To be sure, I am not getting bald, like some young fellows of five-and-forty. And I'm not very grey, considering."

"Henry Bodkin, you are looking better and stronger than you did ten years ago when I saw you just before I——" Here she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Before you married your second, Lavinia. It was a cruel blow. I always looked forward to being your second."

"We must blame fortune, Henry. It was just then that you failed in the coal agency line."

Mr. Bodkin shook his head.

"Pardon, Lavinia. The coal failure was before you married your first. On the last occasion, if you remember, I had just become bankrupt in my select Commercial Academy. Ah! that scholastic institution. There, indeed, the corporal punishments were like Cook's Tours, because they were personally conducted, and always by the principal. It is an ennobling thought. But it is all real, Lavinia. The Society is as safe as the Bank. Lord Addlehede is good for the salary and the rent. Ri tol de rol—— If need be, I will hire a cabman, the most profligate of cabmen that can be found, and pay him by results, as he improves. We shall have the gratitude of all the Bishops on the bench. And now, Lavinia, the obstacles are removed. For the first time in my career there is a permanent income before me. The first and the second are both gone—pardon my abruptness. Sensitive being! My Lavinia weeps. We will take a cottage on the banks of the silver Surrey Canal. There will our lives glide away——"

Mrs. Sampson rose to meet the ardour of her glowing love, and fell, hiding her blushes, upon his shoulder.

"Do you remember," he said, "when you heard my first declaration of love—when I was twenty-four and you were twenty-two?"

"Eighteen, Henry. You are thinking of the second."

"We were sitting by the edge of the canal, near the coal wharf of your late lamented papa, and the setting sun was streaking with rays of red and gold, like a mixture of beet-root and yellow lettuce, the cordage and sails of your papa's fleet, five splendid barges lying at anchor on the bosom of the pellucid stream."

"I remember," murmured Mrs. Sampson. By this time she had resumed her seat and wonted tranquillity, though she allowed her lover to hold her hand. "It was the sweetest moment of my life."

"We compared the barges to the Spanish Armada. It was when I was beginning life, after a romantic and agitated youth, as travelling agent for Pipkin's Compound Patent Pills. 'Pipkin,' I said, when we parted—Pipkin was in temper, I remember—'Pipkin, the worst your worst enemy can wish for you is that you may take a box of your own pills.'"

"I thought you were in the self-opening umbrella business at the time?"

"Afterwards, my dear Lavinia. At the moment I was saturated with pills; I breathed pills; I dreamed of pills. If I made poetry, it was in praise of Pipkin's pills. You had to throw me over—your faithful Bodkin—and accept old Mr. Chiltern, with his five hundred a year—took the Chiltern Hundreds."

Mrs. Sampson sighed gently, and wiped away a tear to the memory of the defunct.

"Poor dear Mr. Chiltern! He was the best, the gentlest of souls. We always helped him to bed, the cook and I, every night, after his fourth tumbler of gin and water. I shall never see such a man again."

"I hope not, my dear. And when he was gone, when I was manager of the company for making new bricks out of old, you pledged me your hand again—and again the cup was dashed from my lip—for the company smashed up, and you married—Sampson."

Again the pocket-handkerchief.

"Poor Augustus!" she sighed. "He had bad temper, it is true. We all have our faults."

"Temper!" echoed Mr. Bodkin. "Was there a chair with four legs left when he broke a blood-vessel in a rage and went off? Did a week ever pass without his being summoned for assaulting somebody, or breaking the peace somehow? But we will not talk of Augustus Sampson, Lavvy; we will name the day—the blushing morn—that makes you mine."

"Always the same—impetuous—eager—Henry. Shall we say—when your Society is established and your position secure?"

Love in a woman who has been twice a widow is never superior to prudential considerations. I believe that is a maxim held by all who know the sex.

"That is already secure, Lavinia," he said.

But she shook her head.

"With my own two hundred settled on me by thoughtful Mr. Chiltern," she said, "and your five hundred, we could live in a fairly comfortable way, though the change from this abode of luxury would be a great loss at first. Still, for your sake, Henry—— And, besides, our dear Rose might marry—indeed, I think that Mr. Carteret is here too often unless he means honourable proposals."

Phrase of the more *banales*, as the French would say. But then Mrs. Sampson was not by birth, education, or marriage lifted above the phrases of vulgarity. And, indeed, Julian Carteret and Rose returned just then to the morning-room. It is well known that the gardens on Campden Hill are like the gardens of country-houses for extent and beauty. No doubt they had been talking botany among the flowers. That is a science, it is well known, which brightens the eyes, puts colour in the cheeks, and lights the smiles that lie in dimples round girlish lips. At least it had that effect upon Rose.

"He's gone," said Julian irreverently. "How did you get on with him, Bodkin? Screwed a ten-pound note out of him for the new Society? Did you hear about the new Society, Rose?"

"Mr. Bodkin was just beginning when we went into the garden."

"You see before you," Julian went on, "the secretary of the new Society for the General Advance of Humanity. Formerly——"

"Never mind the formerly, Mr. Carteret," interposed Mr. Bodkin hastily. "We all of us have our ups and downs. This is an up. Yes, Miss Rose, behold the secretary—at your feet, metaphorically—of the new Society, of which Sir Jacob is one of the vice-presidents. Fellowship—open to ladies—one guinea per annum. Will you become a Fellow? You can write on your cards, Miss Escomb, F.S.A.H., or at full length, Fellow of the Society for the Advancement of Humanity. The letters will be much coveted; Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet, V.P.S.A.H., will look well, I think."

"If my uncle is a vice-president," said Rose, laughing, "the least I can do is to become a Fellow. One guinea?" She took out her purse. "Will you take the money now, Mr. Bodkin?"

Out came note-book and pencil.

"Certainly, Miss Escomb, certainly; with the greatest pleasure. Lord Addlehede will be much gratified. One guinea, Miss Escomb—commission seven and a half per cent.—one shilling and sixpence three farthings." There have been days with Bodkin when that sum would have represented his dinner bill. Those days are gone by, happily; and yet their uncertainties were not without a charm. "Thank you, Miss Escomb. Receipt—signed, H. Theophilus Bodkin."

"Theophilus!" said Julian; "it used to be plain Henry. Why have you changed your name with your trade? When I knew you before——"

"Never mind before, Mr. Carteret; we live in the present. What is the past? Gone—phew!—blown away. Let it be forgotten. We live entirely in the present. To be sure, Lav—I mean Mrs. Sampson—remembers me as Henry; that is a name of childhood. We grew up together, Miss Escomb,

Mrs. Sampson and I, among the violets and primroses of the Surrey Canal. I was Henry—she was Lavinia. I was Paul—she was Virginia. Excuse these early romantic recollections." He looked at his watch. "Half-past twelve; and I have to meet Lord Addlehede at a quarter-past one at the office—*our* office—the new office in Queen Victoria Street, where five-and-twenty girls, all of them young, some of them beautiful, are at present addressing our wrappers at sixpence a hundred. I sit among them like the Sultan in his seraglio."

"Henry!"

"Lav——I mean, Mrs. Sampson."

"Remember that you are a Christian."

"I do; I always shall, now that the Society is started. Good-morning, Miss Rose, lately elected Fellow—F.S.A.H. Good-morning." He bowed cheerily. "Mrs. Sampson—Lavinia," he whispered, "I may see you again—when?"

"I will walk with you, Bodkin," said Julian. "*Au revoir*, Rose; I shall see you this afternoon—at five?"

"Were I a married man, Mr. Carteret," said Bodkin, outside, "I would not bring a boy up as I was brought up; I would make him learn a trade or profession. I grew up, sir, a gentleman of general intelligence; I have lived on my general intelligence ever since. Sometimes I have gone bankrupt on it. I should have shone, I believe, as a lawyer or a divine. My talents have been frittered away in coal offices, wine agencies, travelling on commission, commercial academies, and such vanities, which hold out delusive hopes of large and permanent income. However, I am landed—I believe for life—and, if I may be allowed to impart a profound secret to you, Mr. Carteret, I think I may say that I have landed on the island of Conjugal Felicity. Mrs. Sampson——"

"Say no more, Bodkin; but come and let me drink your happiness at the nearest bar, and over a glass of bitter beer."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE CITY.

"SIR JACOB ESCOMB." The name—by itself; no "and Company," no statement of trade or calling—was on as large a brass plate as you might see anywhere in the City. The plate was not one of those which modestly retire and seek to efface themselves from the sight of man; it did not lurk in the shadow of a dark entrance hall or hide its presence on a staircase lighted only by windows never cleaned. Not at all. It stood well displayed facing the street, just below the level of the average human eye, so that those who ran might read, and those who read might wonder.

"SIR JACOB ESCOMB." Those who ran, those who walked, and those who lounged read the name and sighed with envy. Such as had with them country cousins or persons ignorant of the city would stop them, when they came to the spot, to point out this Plutocratic name. "Sir Jacob Escomb," they would say, in the trembling tone of reverence, "is one of those men who began life with a fourpenny-piece." All men like Sir Jacob begin life on a certain day with a definite sum which becomes historic. "He was a factory hand, and he is not ashamed of it. Now he is worth, it is said, more than a million. Ah! what a country we live in! And such a good man! Foremost in every philanthropic or charitable attempt. Did you read his speech at the Hammerers' Dinner last Thursday? It showed how men of wealth who desire to do good must henceforth hand over to paid workmen the practical details of charity, and exercise for their own part a wise rule over benevolent and charitable efforts by means of cheques and donations. Such men as Sir Jacob cannot be expected to waste their time in personal investigations. As good as a sermon that speech was. A million of money, and all made out of nothing. Out of nothing! What a man! And such a good man! Hush! There he is getting

out of his carriage. Look at the bundle of papers in his hand. I *have* heard it computed that when he was constructing the railways for Two Eagle Land, he had as many as five hundred thousand men in his employ at once."

Fortunate Sir Jacob!

His offices were built up to the brass plate, so to speak. Behind such a plate ordinary offices would have been mean. Your old-fashioned firms can afford to do their work in dingy rooms. A new house ought to proclaim its prosperity by its internal fittings. Those of Sir Jacob's consisted of three stories above the ground-floor. There the rooms were appropriated to clerks. On entering you found yourself opposite a mahogany counter, not intended, as in a shop, to exhibit merchandise, or, as in a bank, for the handing backwards and forwards of gold. It was solely for the reception of visitors. A clerk appeared behind the counter on your entrance: he stepped noiselessly—the whole house was carpeted with some thick and noiseless stuff—from his table, and took your card. Then he vanished, and you were left in a room fitted with one heavy table and a dozen comfortable chairs till he returned. Sometimes it happened that you had to go away, the press of previous appointments being too great; sometimes it happened that you were invited to see Mr. Reuben Gower, instead of Sir Jacob; but if you came by appointment you were asked to walk upstairs at the very moment of the time named.

Upstairs you might see Sir Jacob himself, or you might be put off upon Mr. Gower. In the former case you were handed over to a clerk, quite a young and embryo sort of clerk, who took in your card and showed you into a waiting-room. There were three waiting-rooms round Sir Jacob Escomb's private apartment, and the clerk was a Cerberus who protected each room from the invasion of those who had no appointment. The waiting-rooms—one was large enough for a deputation, and one was small—were furnished in the same way—one table, with leather top, blotting-pad, pens, ink and paper, and massive chairs; the windows were painted over because the view was bounded, the carpets were thick,

fires were burning if the weather was cold, the chairs were like dining-room chairs in some great house, and the table was one of those regulation office tables made of strong and shiny mahogany.

Suppose you had no appointment with Sir Jacob or your business was comparatively unimportant, you were turned over to Mr. Reuben Gower, his secretary. Mr. Reuben Gower was not the younger son of a noble house, but the only son of an obscure house. As his father, too, was dead long since, there might seem no reason for maintaining his Christian name. Mr. Gower, plain, might have done. But it did not. Somehow or other the name of Reuben did not die out. Everybody called Sir Jacob Escomb's secretary, manager, or right-hand man, Reuben—*tout court.* Even the clerks addressed him as Mr. Reuben. It was the custom of the office, and as Reuben was not offended, no one else had the right to complain. Reuben Gower: he was of the same age as Sir Jacob, with whom he had grown up as a boy, with whom he had worked in the same factory, by the side of whom and for whom he had fought the battle of life. Reuben Gower, on the second floor, had only one waiting-room. It is a theory among City people—I mean, especially, City people in financial interests—that if Smith and Jones both together want to see Brown, and if Smith sees Jones, or Jones see Smith, either will at once find out the other's business. Hence the three waiting-rooms round Sir Jacob's private office, where Smith, Jones, and Robinson would all lie hidden, each waiting his turn to see the chief.

Above Reuben Gower's, on the third floor, is the Board-room, also used by Sir Jacob and his friends as a luncheon-room. A discreet door hides what is, practically, a cellaret. There are choice wines in that cupboard, and many a bottle of chablis, sauterne, champagne, and hock have been cracked with due solemnity in the luncheon-room, preparatory to or after serious business below. But it is very well known in the City that Sir Jacob will not take wine during business hours. A glass of sherry with a sandwich for luncheon if you like; but if you press him to have more, he will tell you

with a soft, sad smile that he comes into the City on business, that he is occupied all day long on business, and that he cannot, most unfortunately, drink wine while he is attending to business. After dinner, on the other hand, it is notorious that Sir Jacob Escomb's finest speeches are sometimes made when he has put away enough wine to make a Barclay and Perkins' drayman blind drunk. His capacity for wine is not the least of those qualities for which City men envy Sir Jacob.

It was a house in which all the offices were solid and even splendid: well-lighted, well-furnished, well-fitted; provided with an army of clerks, and surrounded with an atmosphere or halo of solidity and stability. Nor was it by any means a new office. Sir Jacob was between fifty-five and sixty; he had held the same offices for a quarter of a generation. They had not originally been so well-furnished, nor had he held the whole house for that time, but a plate with his name had been on the same door for five-and-twenty years.

In his private room Sir Jacob found that morning a mass of correspondence in addition to the letters he brought with him, open, noted, and arranged by Reuben Gower. With practised eye he ran over the letters, making a few notes as he went along. Then he leaned back in his chair, thoughtful.

Sir Jacob in his private room was not like Sir Jacob on the platform, nor like Sir Jacob at home. In the domestic circle he was an amiable demi-god, whose word was law and whose wishes had to be anticipated. On the platform he was the cheerful expounder of a sunny philanthropy and warm-hearted Christianity which consisted wholly in giving money himself, persuading other people to give it, and praising the glorious names of noblemen, bishops, and other illustrious men who were associated with himself—to praise your associates is to praise yourself—in what he called the Movement. People talk now of a "movement," as if it was an object or an institution. They say that they have given money to the Indian "Movement" when they mean the Indian

Famine Fund. There were few "movements" in which Sir Jacob's name was not prominent either as president, vice-president, or member of the general committee. In his private room, at his office in the City, however, Sir Jacob's features sharpened, his great bushy eyebrows contracted, and his lips—they were the large and full lips which belong especially to men who habitually address audiences in great rooms—locked themselves together. There was not much benevolence left in his face after half-an-hour of work among his papers.

Business was plentiful—on paper. There were the construction of a railway in Central America, orders waiting execution for his ironworks at Dolmen-in-Ravendale, gasworks in a Russian city, waterworks in a Chilian town—fifty other things: all this looked well. On the other hand there were bills to meet, claims to contest, and worse than all, a long and bitter strike in the North, and by that morning's post—a strike in which compromise promised for the moment to be impossible. And the moment was an important one.

Sir Jacob, after a few minutes' reflection, put the matter for the moment out of his mind, and addressed himself to his correspondence. He wrote with great rapidity and ease tossing each letter into a basket as it was written. It would be the duty of the clerk to collect and address those letters in the evening. He looked at his list of appointments. There was an hour to spare. In that interval he wrote twenty letters, all on different subjects, and every one commanding complete mastery of the matter. He read over each letter after it was written, approved it by a nod, and tossed it into the basket. It was one of the secrets of Sir Jacob's success that he could pass easily and rapidly from one subject to another, and not the least of his secrets, that while on a particular subject he could concentrate the whole of his attention to it. He was, in fact, a man who could work, and did habitually work.

Then came the appointments. One after the other the men who had to see Sir Jacob called, stated briefly their

business, received a reply, and went away. There was no waste of words, nor any exchange of meaningless amenities with Sir Jacob Escomb. Everybody knew that, and even a Russian diplomatist would have found it hard to get any waste of words out of this man of business.

The morning appointments over, Sir Jacob looked at his watch. Half-past one—time for the sandwich. He took up a few papers; he would go to luncheon, and talk things over with Reuben Gower. Reuben would be able to suggest something.

He looked in at Reuben Gower's room as he went upstairs to the luncheon-room. He was engaged with a gentleman.

"When you are at leisure, Mr. Gower," said Sir Jacob, "I shall be upstairs."

"The great Sir Jacob?" asked the visitor with awe.

"No other," said Reuben Gower shortly; "and as I was saying——"

The secretary was, as I have said, a man as old as himself, or a little older. He had been with Sir Jacob since the day when, side by side, boys together, they had run through the mud and snow in the dark winter mornings to get within the gates before the factory bell ended. Then they were comrades; now they were master and servant. Then they were friends who quarrelled, fought, and made it up again; now they were chief and secretary. But all along the weaker nature looked up to and reverenced the stronger. It was Jacob who always conquered in their fights; it was Jacob who rose first to be a foreman, then had the courage, followed always by Reuben, to give up the factory and begin as a small contractor; it was Jacob who, when the small jobs multiplied and became large jobs, took pity on the less successful Reuben and admitted him as clerk, foreman, superintendent of works, accountant — everything. A million men at least, at one time or other, had worked for the great contractor; not one of them ever worked for him so long, reverenced him so much, or worked for him so well, as his old friend Reuben Gower. No stickler for large salary was

Reuben; no strict measurer of hours given to the firm; no undue estimator of his own labour. All he had, all he thought, all he knew, he threw into the affairs of the house. The three hundred a year, which Sir Jacob considered an equivalent for his experience and zeal, seemed a noble honorarium to him, the old factory boy who had never got over his respect for hundreds. And while he was content to occupy the simple position of jackal, it never occurred to him that it was mainly by the adaptation of his own ideas, by the conveyance to his own purposes of his own surprising mastery of detail, that the great Sir Jacob prospered and grew fat. A simple, hard-working dependent, but one who had faith in his master, one who felt that there could be no higher lot than in working for a good, a noble, and a strong man; and indeed, if such be the lot of any, dear brethren, write me down that man happy.

Outside the private room they were to each other as to the rest of the world, Mr. Gower and Sir Jacob. Within the sacred apartment, whither no one could penetrate without permission, the old Lancashire habit was kept up, and one was Jacob, the other Reuben.

Reuben looked the older, probably by reason of the careful and laborious life he led. He was thin, grown quite grey, and he stooped. His face was remarkable for a certain beauty which sprang from the possession of some of his ancient simplicity. Men who remain in their old beliefs do retain this look, and it becomes all faces, though it is unfortunately rare.

He was married, and had one son, John, who was naturally in the great Escomb ironworks, a mechanical engineer by trade, and a clever fellow. The father and son were excellent friends on all subjects except one: John could not share his enthusiasm for the great man who employed him.

"He is successful, father, because he has had you in the first place, and half a hundred like me in the second, to work for him."

John did not know, being a young man, that the mere fact of being able to see quite early in life that the way to success

is to make other people work for you, is of itself so highly creditable a perception as to amount to greatness.

"Who," continued the rebellious John, "would not be successful under such circumstances?"

His father shook his head.

"He is a strong man, John—a strong man."

"How has he shown it? Has he invented anything? Has he written well, or struck out any new idea?"

"He is a man of the highest reputation, John—not here in Lancashire only" (they were then at the works), "but in the City of London."

"Every man has the highest reputation who can command so much capital."

"And he is such a good man, John."

"Humph! Then why does not his goodness begin where it ought to, at home? We should have been saved this strike if his goodness had been shown to the hands. Are his men better paid, more considered, more contented, than the men in other works? No—worse. You know that, father. His goodness wants to be proclaimed to all the world; he does good in the sight of men."

"John, Sir Jacob is a political economist. It is hard, he says, to set up private benevolence against the laws of science—as well sweep back the tide with a hearth-brush. Supply and demand, John: the men are the supply, and capitalists the demand."

But John was not to be argued into enthusiasm for Sir Jacob, and returned to the works, where the pits were banked up and the engines were silent, and the men who ought to have been assisting in the whirr-r and turmoil of wheels and steam and leathern bands were idly kicking their heels outside; for Sir Jacob had made no sign of yielding, and they would not give way, though the children were pining away for want of sufficient food, and the sticks were going to the pawn-shop.

Reuben came presently into the luncheon-room, going slowly, and bent as one who is in some kind of trouble.

"You have read those letters, Reuben?" asks the great

man, who had finished his sandwich, and was slowly sipping his sherry, with his back to the empty fire-place.

"Yes, Jacob, I've read them all."

Reuben sat down by the table, and began drumming on it with his fingers.

"And what do you think?"

"I am very anxious. If the Eldorado Railway money is not ready——"

He hesitated.

"Well, Reuben? It is not ready, and I believe it never will be. Prepare yourself for the worst. The Eldorado bubble has burst."

"We must look elsewhere, then, for money. We must borrow, Jacob, for money we must have, and immediately—you know that."

"Borrow!—that is easily said—where? Of course I know we must find money."

"I made up a statement last night, Jacob. Here it is; this is what you have to meet in the next three weeks. I fully reckoned on the Eldorado money, which would have tided us over the difficulty. Jacob, Jacob! I told you that those Central American schemes never come to good!"

"Ay, ay. No use telling me what you prophesied, Reuben; anybody can prophesy. Try now to see how we can face the storm—that is more to the point."

"There's the Ravendale Bank. You're chairman of the board."

"I proposed at the last meeting to borrow fifty thousand. They asked for securities, as a matter of form, and—— Well, I promised the securities, and I have not got them."

"There's the works."

"What can be done while the hands, confound them, are out on strike?"

"How much will they let you overdraw?"

"Not much further than we have gone already."

"Jacob, seven years ago we had a bad time to face—just as bad as this—you remember, just before the French war, out of which you did so well. Then you found at one

haul seventy thousand pounds. Can't you repeat that transaction?"

"The money was not mine: it was my ward's, Julian Carteret's money."

Reuben started to his feet.

"Do you mean that you took his money to help yourself out of difficulties? Jacob, Jacob! And all that money gone?"

"It can't be gone, man," said the millionaire. "How can it be gone when it was invested in the works? And a safer investment could not be made."

"If the world would only think so," sighed Reuben.

"Why did we not take steps to raise money before?"

"Because you were so certain of Eldorado. Why—" (here Reuben grew more agitated still) "did you not sell out your bonds?"

"No," said Jacob gloomily. "Perhaps it will recover. I saw a note in the paper this morning that the stock would probably rise again."

"Stock you might buy, but never hold," said Reuben. "And the Columbian Canals, and the Mexican Mines, and Turks and Egyptians, all gone done together. What shall we do—what shall we do?"

"Concede what the men claim, and start the works again," said Sir Jacob, who took things more easily than his subordinate, in whom, indeed, he had full confidence. "Concede all that they ask, and when the furnaces are in full blast, make a limited company of it."

Reuben shook his head.

"That cannot be done in a week. Consider, Sir Jacob, you have only a week. If we could only see a way—if we could only gain time. Perhaps I ought to have seen what was coming a little sooner."

"What is coming, Reuben?" Sir Jacob leaned across the table, and whispered the words in a frightened voice. "What is coming?"

"Ruin, Jacob, ruin!" replied Reuben sorrowfully. "If you cannot raise money, ruin. If you cannot restore Julian Carteret his fortune—worse than ruin."

"No," cried the Baronet, "not that—not that. I did my best for my ward. The world will know that I acted for the best: that the works were paying an enormous income——"

"At the time, the money staved off bankruptcy. When the world knows that, what will the world say?"

"How the devil is the world to know it, Reuben?" asked Sir Jacob angrily.

"By the books. All your books will be examined. Your position can be and will be traced year after year. The transactions of every day in your business history will come to light. Man, your affairs did not begin yesterday to end to-morrow. You are too big a ship to go down without a splash. There will be too many drowned when you are wrecked for the world to sit down quiet and say, 'Poor Sir Jacob!' They will examine all your books."

"All, Reuben?" His face was white now, and the perspiration stood upon his brow. "All?"

He spoke as if he was a child learning for the first time what is done in the case of a great smash. In point of fact, he was bringing the thing home to himself, and realising what its effect would be upon him.

There were certain books known to him alone, and to no one else, not even to Reuben. These books were downstairs in his own room, locked in a fireproof safe. Should they, too, be examined? He mentally resolved that the key of that safe should at least be kept in his own pocket. And yet how instructive to the student in the art of rapidly piling up a fortune would be the study of these volumes! More instructive than any books kept in the office of Reuben Gower, because they showed of late years a history chiefly of wild speculation, decadence, and approaching ruin. When a man, for instance, has had extensive dealings with the Russian Public Works Department, when he obtains contracts in other foreign countries, when he provides estimates for great national works, which are afterwards largely exceeded, when he receives payment for work never done,

and when he makes charges for materials never delivered, the private history of these transactions would, if put into the form of a continuous narrative, be as pleasant reading for the fortunate holder of the fortune so acquired as the true story of his own life by Cagliostro or Beaumarchais, or the faithful narrative of his own doings by a member of the great Tammany ring. For in such a book there would be bribes—plentiful and liberal bribes—the giving and the taking of commissions, the giving shares in transactions not quite warrantable by the terms, strictly interpreted, of written covenants, and the introduction of illustrious names —grand dukes, princes, ministers, all sorts of people whom, for the credit of their biographies, as well as that of the age in which they lived—it would be well not to mention in connection with such doings.

There is no absolute law laid down on this delicate subject; in the Decalogue it is certain that it is nowhere stated in so many words: "Thou shalt not bribe: thou shalt not take a commission: thou shalt not receive interest other than that agreed upon." Whatever is not forbidden is allowed. That is the rule on which Ritualist clergymen always act, and if Ritualists, why not that much more respectable body —public moralists? It is a sad thing to own that the censorious world looks with disgust—affected, no doubt—on a man who has built up a fortune in such a way. Sir Jacob might have thought, when he was tempted, of a leading case. There was a man a few years ago who was greatly, implicitly trusted by his employer, and paid well for giving honest advice to a confiding public. He sold that advice; he took money right and left for the words he wrote, which mightily influenced the fortune of companies and shares, and though his friends pleaded, perhaps quite honestly, that the advice he had given was good, neither his employers nor the public accepted the plea, and the mistaken man retired into obscurity, nor was he forgiven even when, after he died, he was found to be worth a quarter of a million sterling. Actually, a rich man died, and was not respected for his wealth! Wonderful! Perhaps Sir Jacob did think of that

case when he trembled to think that *all* the books might be examined.

At least those should not.

But Reuben had others. Among them, as he said, were the books of seven years ago, when the shipwreck was only averted by the timely aid of seventy thousand pounds, all Julian Carteret's fortune. There should be, Sir Jacob resolved, a break in the sequence of those books.

"Is it necessary, Reuben," he asked mildly, "that all the books must be handed over? We might begin, say three years back."

"No, Jacob. Some of your transactions date farther back than seven years. That year must go with the rest. There is one chance. Julian Carteret is a friend of yours, as well as your ward. He is a good deal in your house. He rides with Miss Escomb——"

"Yes, yes," cried Jacob. "Reuben, you are my friend again. Shake hands, my chap!" he cried, in the familiar old North-country language. "Bankruptcy we can stand, Eldorado and the strike will explain that much. But what they would call abuse of trust I could not stand. We shall smash to-morrow, if you like. We *shall get up again, Reuben*, stronger than ever. The same forces that raised me before shall raise me again. I am as vigorous as when I was twenty. So are you. And we shall have the backing of all the world, with the sympathy of every one who has money to lend. Let us become insolvent, if we must. But before we do, Rebuen, Julian shall be engaged to Rose."

"How will that help?" asked Reuben sadly. "I was going to say that Julian, being a friend, might be taken into confidence."

"Not at all. If Julian is to marry my niece, how can he charge me, her uncle, with using his money for my own purposes? He will only be one more to go down with me; and when I get up again, we shall all get up together. To be sure, in that case, Rose's fortune would have to go with her, to her husband. However——"

The man was a strong man, that was clear. He deserved to succeed. He had the strength of self-reliance, of belief in his own methods, of confidence in his luck. With certain insolvency staring him in the face, he saw a way of meeting his fate with the calmness which belongs to virtue, of gaining more reputation out of it, of wiping off old scores, and beginning new, and of escaping the consequences of the one action of his life which he was afraid to tell the world. He was a strong man, but, for the first time in his life, Reuben felt repulsion rather than admiration for the proof of such strength. To him, a man of more sensitive nature, who had no other reputation than his own integrity had brought him, bankruptcy was a thing so terrible as to dwarf almost all other misfortunes. And here was his master going into it almost with a light heart.

"Don't be downcast, Reuben." Sir Jacob clapped him on the shoulder. "Why, I've faced this danger scores of times when you thought all was going well, and never with such good chances as now. I shall turn it to account."

"But how will you live, Sir Jacob; how will you live meanwhile?"

"Lady Escomb, Reuben, had by prenuptial settlement thirty thousand pounds when she died. The interest of that money was devised to go to Rose when she marries, that is, if she marries with my consent. This money is in the Funds."

"But then you will have nothing."

"Why—no. I shall have the handling of the thirty thousand, I dare say; but it is not by that money I mean to get up again. Bankruptcy," he went on; "it is not the first time that a great contractor has smashed, and it will not be the last. Contractors, in fact, never quite know how they stand. But I think it will be an event in the City when the news is known: and there will be deep sympathy when it is learned by what an accumulation of misfortunes the disaster has been brought about. Bankruptcy! Let it come, then. Let the men go on with their strike, Reuben. We will concede nothing—nothing. Let the Eldorado

Government fail to meet their engagements with me: let the Columbian Harbour and the Mexican Mines all collapse together: let Turks and Egyptians go down lower than ever: they can't go too low for me if I am to be bankrupt: misfortunes cannot come too thick."

Reuben again looked at him with forced admiration and a certain involuntary shrinking. He forgot that to a man who has once tasted it, public applause, public sympathy, public praise, publicly, noisily administered, are like a draught of cold water to a thirsty man, or the shadow of a great rock to a noontide traveller in the desert. Sir Jacob was thinking of the history he could command—of course he was not one of those who ever write themselves—in certain organs where he had secret influence unknown to the editors. He was thinking of the speeches he would make, how he would appear before the world, not as the disgraced man, he would hope, but as the man whom the buffets of fortune—say, rather, the chastening hand of Providence—has temporarily laid low: how his voice would rise, his figure straighten, his arms spread out as he would repeat the words, "Not disgraced, my friends, not disgraced: only beaten down—to lift my head again, and become once more a goodly tree—yea—with branches of shelter and fruits of comfort." The peroration struck him as so good that he immediately entered it in his note-book for subsequent development. "Branches of shelter, fruits of comfort—or consolation. Query—How can trees be said to Do Good?"

"I am glad to see you take it so cheerfully, Jacob. I thought you'd a pined a bit over it," said Reuben doubtfully.

"Pined? not I. Why?"

"And as you are so cheerful, I won't tell you what I was going to tell you about my son John."

"Your son John? Ay—ay—he is in my works, I believe. Yes, I remember. What about him?"

"Some affairs of the boy's, Jacob."

"John's affairs." Sir Jacob laughed. He was actually in good humour again, he—going to be bankrupt in less than a fortnight, and for two millions at least. "John's

affairs? A ten-pound note in a savings bank, a share in a building society, a quarrel in an Odd Fellows' lodge. Well, well, let us hear."

"It is more than that," said Reuben. "John has got an invention, and he wanted to show it to you; but his ideas are absurd, ludicrous. I told him so. Remember, Jacob, they are not mine; don't be offended with me."

"He always was a hot-headed boy, your son, Reuben. But we will see. Look here. Bring him over to dinner this evening. There will be no one there except Rose and Julian Carteret, and—yes—at the same time drop a note over to Bodkin, at his new Society, and ask him to come too. And now I've got a deputation to receive in a few minutes, and we must stop this interview. Don't be downcast, Reuben. Bankruptcy? It will establish my fortune on a broader basis than ever. Telegraph to Dolmen that not the smallest concession will be made. Don't sell out a single Eldorado Bond; send a paragraph to all the papers that their Government has failed to make the regular payments to Sir Jacob Escomb, the great railway contractor: make everything as public as you can. Work, Reuben, work. We shall have our reward after the smash."

"And now," he said, "I shall have another glass of sherry. Have a glass, Reuben? Better. Send me down the books for the time when I invested Julian's money, I will take care of *them*.

A knock at the door. His own private clerk opens it, and shows a head, nothing more.

"The deputation, Sir Jacob."

"The deputation? What deputation?"

"Secretary and deputation from the council of the Friends of the Patagonians, Sir Jacob. By appointment."

"Ah! yes—I had forgotten. They are in the reception-room? I will come. Send up the porter with sherry. Two glasses each. The deputation sherry, not the dry. I will not keep them waiting long."

"Always," said Sir Jacob, addressing Reuben, "always send up sherry to your deputation, and always keep them

waiting. Nothing like sherry to warm the heart, and ten minutes' patience to cool the heels. I wonder if I shall have many more deputations after the smash."

He went and received them graciously: heard what was agreed on behalf of the Patagonians, how this fine race of giants had been too long allowed to run wild without any of the benefits of civilisation and religion, and how it was proposed——and so on. And then he made his speech, which he set purposely in a frame of sadness. He said that the condition of Patagonia had long been in his mind, that when constructing a railway in Brazil many years ago, he had personally visited the South American Continent, and reflected even then . . . Lastly, that in these times of change and sudden disaster it was impossible to promise anything, but they might announce, if that would help, his own sympathy with the cause: that he would gladly become a member of their general committee: and that in the course of the year he would see in what manner he should be able to help them.

The deputation gone, other people who also had appointments began to call: beggars, promoters, all kinds of people who wanted to use the name of the great philanthropist for their own objects, and these objects, if not for their own gain, were for their own glory. Find me a man or woman in this London, the nest of societies and institutions, who promotes a cause anonymously and without the desire of gain. London consists of many cities. There are London Commercial, London Aristocratic, London Frivolous, London Ecclesiastic, London Benevolent, London Lazy, London Artistic, London Literary. London Benevolent, a field hitherto little explored, is a city whose inhabitants ardently pant for fame: unkind fortune has generally denied them the brains or the opportunities necessary to win fame by the ordinary channels: they win it in channels of their own. Some of them, chiefly women, go a begging from door to door: some, chiefly men, get up projects of benevolence, and write letters showing how the Lord Mayor must first be approached: some make speeches on platforms: some

write to the newspapers: some write pamphlets. So, with infinite pains, they rescue their names, as they fondly think, from the oblivion in which, like sheep, lie all the human race: so, when they might have led easy and pleasant lives, helpful to their neighbours, along some cool sequestered way of life, and far from the madding crowd's ignoble way, they have preferred the trouble and labour by which notoriety is won, they have mistaken the babbling tongue of notoriety which speaks of one man this day and another the next, for the solemn trumpet tones of fame, and hush themselves to sleep with the fond persuasion of the poet that they will not wholly die. London Benevolent has other citizens besides those who seek for glory: it has those who seek for pay or plunder: it has the crowd who live upon the generosity of England: while Sir Jacob Escomb is a type of one, Theophilus Bodkin may stand for the other.

London Benevolent! Out of such a field there yet grow so many flowers of grace, pity, charity, and love, that one would not check the fertilising streams of gold that flow into it from every quarter. But yet, if people knew: if windbags were exploded: if the true tale could be told: if the disinterested philanthropists could be pulled off their platforms: if——. I am myself about to form (anonymously and without pay) an entirely new Society. Among the rules of it shall be one that there are to be no publication of names, no payment of officer, secretary, or anything, no committee, no council, no Lord Mayor in it, no patronage by Royalty, no list of subscribers: nothing. No one will belong to it, because in a very short time every one will. If it has a name, and I think it is better without one, it shall be called the Grand Mundane Helpful Association of All Humanity. No one will be a member who does not personally and actively assist in finding out dark corners, unclean places, vicious habitats, and resorts of crime, or that desperate poverty which makes crime. We shall not leave the discovery of such places to curates, beadles, Bible-women, and the young enthusiasts who rig themselves out

like ecclesiastical tomfools in an old Morality. We shall find them for ourselves. And when they are found we shall cure the patients, not by admonition, but by indulgence. Prisons shall be abolished: all benevolent societies shall die a natural death, and every man shall give part of the day to the help of brother man. Of course, when that is done all philosophies and systems will be swept away and forgotten: we may take down all the treatises on philosophy from our shelves, and give them over to the butterman. We can send away all books on social economy and law from the libraries, and make a bonfire of them: all religions will be merged into one: we may take down the theological books and toss them joyfully into the fire: we may also tell the priests that we can dispense with their sermons in future:— why, there is more than half the literature of the world gone at one swoop. What a relief! Whew!—— The dream grows too bewildering.

All the afternoon Sir Jacob continued to receive his callers, making new appointments, undertaking speeches, signing papers. No one would have guessed that the man who brought to the business of the moment such clear insight, such practical suggestions, and such ready sympathy, was a hopelessly ruined man, who had no securities left on which money could be raised. That was impossible to guess.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW PARTNER.

SIR JACOB ESCOMB probably had a good many cousins, second cousins, cousins german, and cousins of every degree. Every man born of two parents, who themselves require four progenitors, who in their turn want eight, must needs have cousins by the score. These cousins, however, in the case of people whose grandfathers belong to the prehistoric period, are invisible and unknown. In Jacob Escomb's early life they would have presented themselves

to the factory lad as people like himself and his own father and mother, specimens of the class who toil hard, live hard, spend all, drink as much as they can, and die early. Later on, they might have gathered in troops round his doors, clamouring for a dole out of their rich relation's enormous wealth. But they did not. Perhaps they were unconscious that one of their own stock was doing such credit to the name: perhaps, as is often the case with poor relations—and a great comfort it is when they are so constituted—they were too proud to force themselves where they were not wanted. In any case, the only relation Sir Jacob had in the world, of his own blood, was his niece Rose. Her father, who combined his brother's shrewdness without his ability, had been content, as I have said, to work quietly without an effort to rise, and died leaving a little girl thirteen years of age as a legacy to his brother.

I have explained how Sir Jacob received his legacy, I refrain from enlarging on the hopes and ambitions which Rose's beauty when she came to him after her eighteenth birthday excited in his breast. He would rise higher in the social scale by means of her. She would marry well, she would connect him with some noble House. Like all self-made men, Sir Jacob thought over-much of social position, and measured the height to which he had risen by the rank of the people he could count as his friends.

That evening he walked all the way home, a common thing with him after a day of excitement and hard work, and surveyed the position. Well, the sacrifice must be made. Rose must marry Julian, if possible. Farewell all the chances of a noble alliance. He had the books of that period under his own custody now, he would take care that they should not go out of his own hands, the history of that "investment" should remain a secret between himself and Reuben. As for the blow, it must fall; he felt as if it had already fallen; he knew well enough, he had known for months that it must come, he knew that to raise more money was impossible, he had sold, mortgaged, and anticipated a great deal more extensively than his secretary knew;

and the last disaster, the insolvency of the Eldoradian Government, only accelerated the ruin which strikes, the fall in stocks, and bad times generally had been working for him. His heroism or callousness, as it seemed to Reuben, was that of a man who has been contemplating the blow for so long that when it falls it is a positive relief. The agony had all been anticipated.

But there could be no more dreams of matrimonial greatness; the only thing left was to retreat with honour and to carry with him in his downfall the sympathy of the world. No thought of the hundred clerks whose fall would be, so to speak, upon the hard kerbstone, while his own would be on cushions and pillows; none of the thousands of men who looked to his pay-offices for their daily bread. When had Sir Jacob ever given one thought to the welfare of his own people? As well expect a general to spare the lives of his soldiers.

Rose, at home, with no suspicion of what was impending, spent the day in a long dream. Julian was in love with her, Julian had asked her to be his wife: was that a real thing or was it a dream? No, it was real; he loved her, he had said so, and she—did she love him? It was, as yet, early to ask herself the question. Love comes upon a girl in so full a current, so impetuous a stream, that at first she is carried away, senseless almost, upon its waves. She has no breath left to ask herself what she can give in return; she has only to sit, and wait, and wonder, and be happy. Julian was in love with her. All day long there was a round red spot on either cheek where Julian had kissed her, all day long she sat with blushing brow thinking of how his arms lay round her waist, all day his voice haunted her as he spoke words sweet as honey from the honeycomb.

She avoided Mrs. Sampson because her heart was full, and when she was tired of wandering among the spring flowers in the garden, sought her own room and sat there with a book before her, trying to read, but breaking down in the attempt, and falling back upon thoughts of Julian and of love.

Love at nineteen is surely the greatest happiness that can fall to any girl. She is too young to calculate the chances, or to know the dangers of wedded life. It is all pure pleasure to fulfil so early the function for which, as her school-life has taught her, she has been brought up, that of standing, the most prominent figure in the whole ceremonial, before an altar to be married. We are not simple shepherdesses, I trow; we who have been to fashionable schools know a good deal. We do not want love in a cottage; not at all; we would rather remain without love in a villa. We do not want a crust with affection, we would much rather have a salmi of partridge or a mayonnaise without. We have been educated to attract, and we live to attract; we would wish him whom we are fated to attract to be young, good-tempered, sympathetic, artistic, and handsome, as well as rich. Of course he must be rich to begin with. The main thing is the indispensable thing. None of us dream of poverty, even as a possible chance in life, and when we speak of marriage, we mean an establishment *comme il faut*.

Happy Rose! All these things came to her, just as they might come to a girl in a novel. Julian was handsome—who could doubt that? He was rich, as men go; seventy thousand pounds means, because he had often told Rose, three thousand pounds a year. Now, at Campden Hill, where everything spoke of boundless resources, three thousand a year did not seem much, but Rose knew from the way in which her schoolfellows looked at things that three thousand pounds means a really good income, as incomes go; one which allows of considerable spending and consequent enjoyment. Then Julian was young, just twenty-five, an excellent age for a lover. "Had he ever been in love before?" thought Rose. There is always that delicate question to be asked or suggested in the early days of courtship; and always deceitful man, who is like the serpent in getting round an Eve, has to make unveracious statements and explanations that he might have fancied himself in love once or twice already, but that he never knew before what

true love meant. We know what they are worth, those statements. The question, in order to elicit the exact truth, ought to be put by the young lady in the form of a public advertisement.

Thus—

"Whereas Julian Carteret, gentleman, of the Union Club, aged twenty-five, has offered his hand to Rose Escomb, of Campden Hill, the said Rose Escomb, who wishes to accept him, hereby calls upon all persons of her own sex, in any rank, to whom the said Julian has at any time, or at any place, made directly or indirectly overtures or confessions, pretence or prelude, of love, or with whom he has transgressed the legitimate bounds of flirtation, to communicate to her, in the strictest confidence, all the details and full particulars of the *amour* or *amourette*."

There: and pretty kettles of fish there would be to fry, if this method of public advertisement were only to come into fashion.

Rose resolved on asking Julian the delicate question that very afternoon, but did not, because she found no opportunity.

At five o'clock he came again, but Mrs. Sampson was there and other people called. At half-past six she went for a drive with Mrs. Sampson. They dined, as a rule, at eight. Perhaps after dinner there would be an opportunity.

The Park was full of carriages and people. "How pale the girls looked," thought Rose. Was that because they had no Julians to make love to them? And how wearisome their lives must be without some such strong arm as Julian's to lean upon. Pity is a luxury, because it implies for the most part a little superiority. We pity the poor creatures who have fallen from paths of rectitude, and at the same time we feel a little glow of satisfaction in thinking that we could not possibly so fall. Rose's pity for the listless and bored faces in the carriages was, perhaps, not unmixed with that self-approbation. If their pulses were

languid, hers was beating full and strong; if their blood ran lazily along their veins, hers ran in a warm, swift current; if their cheeks were pale and their looks languid, her own cheeks were bright and her face full of life and happiness.

"Home, dear?" asked Mrs. Sampson. "We dine at half-past seven to suit Mr. Gower, Sir Jacob's secretary, who is coming. Quite a dinner-party, indeed. Mr. Gower brings his son, Mr John Gower."

"Oh, I know him," said Rose; "I am glad he is coming, my old friend John Gower. He used to be pleasant to talk to with his rough brusque ways. I wonder if he is pleasant still. It is seven years since I saw him last; he has been all the time in my uncle's works. I wonder what he is like to look at."

"And Mr. Bodkin is coming, too," said Mrs. Sampson, with a little demure dropping down of her eyelids. "*My* friend, Mr. Bodkin, who was here this morning on business connected with the new Society."

"I am glad he is coming," said Rose vaguely; "Julian Carteret is coming too."

"Oh!" Mrs Sampson did not say what she felt, that on the whole she would have been glad to dispense with Mr. Carteret's company for that one evening. She had planned a little programme in which Sir Jacob should spend the after-dinner time, which was not long, with Mr. Gower, Rose with Mr. John Gower, leaving herself free to exchange pleasant things with Henry Bodkin. And now the programme was all upset by the intrusion of Julian Carteret.

Perhaps he would not come.

But he did: came before any of the rest arrived: came with a face all aglow with satisfaction half an hour before dinner: and was there to welcome the three unwonted guests before Sir Jacob appeared.

Reuben is quiet but at his ease in the big house, whose grandeur does not overwhelm him. He respects its owner, not the house, and he looks sad to-night because he knows that in a few days all these splendid things will pass away

and become the property of some one else. Sitting at meat with a man who is to be a bankrupt in a few days is like taking a cheerful meal with a man the day before he is hanged. Wonderful, too, that Sir Jacob looks so cheerful and talks so bravely.

John Gower is a young man with a ruddy countenance, curling brown hair, strong features, and red hands marked with hard work. Late dinners and dress-coats are not his usual style of life: but he is here to-night with a definite object, and he tries to be agreeable. Picture to yourself a young man of twenty-two, who is absolutely ignorant of the tolerant carelessness of London, who is incapable of conversation, and who is always, whatever he does or says, in earnest. If you look in his face you will see lines about the eyes already: they are the lines of thought and anxiety. If you look in his eyes you will see that they are eyes which are steadfast and firm: eyes that mean success. John Gower means to succeed. John Gower is of the stuff whence England has got her greatness: he can fight: he can work: he can wait: he can be frugal: he believes in himself as strongly as any fighting man of Queen Elizabeth's time; and he believes in the might, majesty, and glory of the machinery among which he is always at work.

Mr. Bodkin has not quite put off with his secretarial garb the secretarial demeanour. He is ostentatiously respectful to Sir Jacob: he listens to his utterances as if they were proverbs to be remembered: he even repeats them softly to himself. The secret of this behaviour is not a disposition to grovel on the part of Mr. Bodkin: he is no more a groveller than any other poor devil who is just a pound or two this side of nothing: it is the admiration which a man who at forty-five finds himself a complete failure has naturally conceived for a man who seems a complete success.

The dinner is not very brilliant: Sir Jacob's seldom are: when the great man is silent, there is little conversation, and what Julian Carteret says is generally flippant, and falls on unresponsive hearts except for that of Rose. When the ladies go things are a little worse for Julian. Never,

perhaps, was a more discordant group of men got together to circulate the decanter. Sir Jacob, calm in conscious superiority, lays down the law, while he absorbs copiously: —it is, as I have said, a mark of this man's strength that he can, and does, drink immense quantities of wine without feeling in the slightest degree affected. It is a Princely—a Royal—quality to possess. Reuben, hanging his head, listens gravely and sadly. John listens impatiently, drinks nothing, and looks as if he would like to contradict. Mr. Bodkin listens deferentially, and looks as if he would like more talk; he also sticks manfully, like Sir Jacob, to the port. Julian listens with an air as if the whole thing was an inexpressible bore, and keeps the claret within reach.

Presently Sir Jacob asks if no one will have any more wine. No one will.

"Then, Julian," he says, "you will take Mr. Bodkin into the drawing-room with you. We have a little business to talk over here."

A good opportunity. He has Rose to himself at her piano for a whole hour: the drawing-room is large, and Mrs. Sampson with Bodkin are at the other end. "I believe, Rose," whispers Julian, "that Bodkin is making love. Isn't it shameful? and actually in our presence."

When the door was shut, the Baronet went to a side-board, and from a drawer produced an inkstand and a packet of paper. Then he rang the bell.

"Coffee in half an hour. Do not disturb us until then. And, Charles, cigars."

Reuben Gower did not smoke: John refused a cigar because he wanted to have all his wits about him, and because he would have preferred the little wooden pipe which was lying in his greatcoat pocket, only he did not dare ask for it. The Baronet took the largest and finest cigar in the chest, which contained twenty compartments, all filled with choice brands. Then he filled and drank a full glass of port, and then leaning contentedly back in his chair, the *vera effigies* of peace of mind, stable affluence, and benevolent comfort, instructed Reuben to open the case.

"You said, Reuben, that your son desires my help and advice, I believe. Well, John Gower, such help and advice as I can offer I am willing to give. What is it now? Is it an offer from some other works with higher salary? Are you discontented? Discontent with the young is a very, very mournful sign."

"If we were not discontented, we should always remain where we are," said John bluntly. "Were you contented when you were a young man?"

"I was ambitious, perhaps; fired with the healthy desire of success."

"I am ambitious too," said John roughly. "My desire of success is as healthy as yours."

"Well—well. What is it?"

"I have spent pretty well all my life about your works, Sir Jacob, as perhaps you know. If you do not know, it does not much matter. I was sent to school within the shadow of the furnaces, and it was my greatest pleasure as a boy to wander among the engine-houses and study the machinery. So that I suppose that by the time I was fourteen years old, which was when I was apprenticed to you in order to become a mechanical engineer, there was little in the place that I did not understand as well as the man who put the machinery together."

"A clever boy," murmured his father. "Always a clever boy, but self-willed."

"Naturally, when one understands a thing, one begins to try how it can be improved. Contentment won't do with machinery, Sir Jacob, whether you are old or young."

"Right," said the Baronet. "You owe, however, the best of your thoughts and all your work to your employer."

"That is the employer's theory," returned the young man, who was not in the least abashed by being in the presence of so great a man. "It is not mine. I have given you what you paid me for. Since my apprenticeship was finished, I have been one of your regular engineers, receiving the regular engineer's pay. I don't grumble at that,

because it is what all get. If I were twenty years older and had a dozen children I should grumble."

"Come, John, come," said his father.

"No, father," said John. "I shall go on my own way. I came here to have my say out, and if Sir Jacob does not like to hear the truth, he may tell me so himself."

"Surely we live only in order to hear the truth ourselves, and to do Good to others by telling it," said the Baronet. "Is it the truth that some of my engineers complain of their pay? Is that what you would say, John Gower?"

"All your engineers, all your clerks, all your people, from the superintendent to the youngest hand, complain of your pay, Sir Jacob. When they read your fine speeches they say that charity begins at home."

"Go on, John Gower. I am accustomed to misrepresentation, and ingratitude I can bear. Go on."

"Well—" John made a face as if he was swallowing a very nasty medicine. "It doesn't do any good, I suppose, to fire up and tell all. But I suppose you know that there is not general contentment and satisfaction at the works, Sir Jacob?"

"I know that some among you," said Sir Jacob, knocking off the ash of his cigar, "have instigated my hands to strike. And I wish I knew who had done it. Because if I knew that man he should go, even if it were the son of Reuben Gower here. You will, perhaps, go down to-morrow, John Gower. You will tell them, from me, that I will not make the smallest concession, that they must accept my terms or stay outside altogether. Pray do not forget to tell them that even if they remain I will never give in."

This was a very proper sort of stroke, because the promise was certain to be told about, and people would connect bankruptcy with principle. Few men can do more than go bankrupt on principle.

"However, you did not come here, I presume, to teach me my duty—ME—my duty." Sir Jacob spoke calmly, as if he was not in the least annoyed by the young man's plainness of speech. In fact, he was not. North-countrymen

are practical, and their dislike to humbug makes them welcome even rude truth-telling.

"No, Sir Jacob, I did not," replied John. "My father told you, I believe, that I have made a discovery, being a discontented man"—he smiled in Sir Jacob's face—"a discovery of which you will be the first to recognise the importance. It is a mechanical discovery."

"Ay, ay—some little improvement—some alteration. Let us see if we can use it at the works."

"I have here, Sir Jacob, the specifications"—he drew out a little roll of small diagrams—"of my invention. You will see that we have to do with no little improvement, but a great one: no small alteration, but a radical change. Did my father tell you that I set a high price upon this invention?"

"He said you set an extravagant price upon it."

"Did he tell you what my price is?"

"No."

"John, John," his father rebuked him. "Don't grasp at too much. Be moderate."

"My price has risen since the morning," the young man went on. "It has doubled, father."

"What?"—Reuben started from his chair in surprise—"doubled!—doubled!"

"Sir Jacob, this invention is an immense, a boundless fortune in itself!"

"An invention made on my own works, by a lad whom I have educated, with my own materials, by the son of my private secretary and old friend, should, I think, have been first shown to myself."

"I do show it to you first. I do more than that, sir—I offer you the refusal of it. Do not say that I am ungrateful. But to make quite sure that there shall be no misunderstanding, I have registered the thing at the Patent Office, and secured my own rights."

"And this is confidence," murmured Sir Jacob sorrowfully. "This is confidence between man and man—the trust which the young man learns to repose in his elders: he invents something—it may or may not be valuable;

instead of coming to me, whose advice might have helped him——"

"He goes to the Patent Office," said John, laughing. "Wonderful, isn't it, Sir Jacob? He does not even go to his father, because that dear old man would always take whatever he learned straight to his employer. This inventor actually hid his secret from his own father, so that he might himself be the one to introduce it—to Sir Jacob."

He bowed with reverence, half-assumed, half-real, to the man who paid him his meagre salary. John Gower felt himself so much the master of the situation that he could say or do what he pleased. Happy position! to be four-and-twenty years of age, to have hit, partly by good luck, partly after that long course of work and study without which no good luck is of any use, upon a secret which promised, nay, held out a certainty of effecting such improvement in machinery as would make the holder of the patent a man of enormous wealth. Why, then, did he offer his invention to Sir Jacob? Because, in the first place, the reputed millionaire could work it better than any financing firm, and in offering to divide profits with Sir Jacob he was probably doubling them; in the second place, because he was a lad with a little sentiment behind his rough, rude practicality, and wanted to please his father; and lastly, for another reason which he had, and which he had hitherto kept to himself.

Without a word in addition, John Gower laid the plans before Sir Jacob.

He was right in his estimate of the great man's power of discernment. For years he had left the practical part of his work entirely to others; for years he had neglected the fields in which his earliest triumphs were won; but yet he had not forgotten. Sir Jacob had as good an eye for a wheel and a piston as ever—an eye which had not forgotten its early training—an eye which was as quick to seize and put together as that of any young mechanician in his workshops.

The first external evidence of appreciation which he showed

was that he laid down his cigar and examined the specifications thoughtfully. Then he looked gravely across the table at the young fellow.

"All your own doing?" he asked.

"All," said John.

"Any one in the secret?"

"No one."

"Good."

Then Sir Jacob fell to examining the plans again.

Presently, the plans before him, he took paper and pen, and began to make calculations. Feeling a little annoyed at the eyes of his guests, which were naturally fixed upon him, he took another glass of port, and pushed the decanter across to John.

"There, take some more wine, you and your father. And don't talk—I mean, don't interrupt—don't stare; I shall be ready in five minutes."

In ten minutes he put down the pencil and spoke, shading his eyes—

"This is a discovery, John Gower."

"It is, sir."

"Reuben, your son is a very clever man."

"A good many clever men have come out of the old place, Jacob," said his old schoolfellow.

"My word, Reuben, you're right!" They had dropped, involuntarily, into the Lancashire dialect, the pronunciation of which we need not try to reproduce. "You're right, Reuben, chap, a deal of clever men."

Then he turned to John.

"Business, young man. Name the price."

John reddened. He was going to play his highest card.

"My price——" He stammered, then recovered himself with an effort. "I might take my patent to financing people and show it to them," he said; "I might raise a company to work it——"

"Better not," said Sir Jacob.

"I might sell it to some man like yourself, in Middlesborough or Barrow-in-Furness. I might take it over to

America; all those plans would do for me quite as well as the one I am going to propose to you. I will let you have my patent, Sir Jacob, on two conditions."

"Go on, John; go on."

"Be moderate, John—oh, be moderate," urged his parent.

"The first is that you take me in as a half-partner in your iron-works, keeping the whole business separate from the contracts——"

"John, John!" said his father, "a half-partner!—with Sir Jacob Escomb—Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet, F.R.G.S., Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, Black Eagle of Russia, Iron Vulture of Prussia, and Copper Hawk of Austria, besides Knight of the Holy Joseph of Brazil! Are you mad, John—are you out of your senses?"

"Not at all, father," said John; "I am only diving below all the externals to get at the real. Half-partner in the profits of the ironworks of Sir Jacob Escomb, Baronet, Vulture, Hawk, and Eagle, as you say. My discovery against his prestige, my profits against his debts, my power of managing the men against his unpopularity, my genius against his experience. Is that a fair bargain, Sir Jacob?"

Curious to say, the Baronet took no offence at this extremely impudent and irreverent speech—no offence at all. He only laughed. To Reuben Gower's amazement—for the good secretary expected the ground to open and swallow up this new Dathan—Sir Jacob actually laughed.

"He is a well-plucked lad, this boy of your's, Reuben. Did you teach him to ruffle his feathers and swagger like this?"

"Nay, nay, Jacob; it's pure natural devilment in the boy."

"Half partnership, you say? Will nothing less content you?"

"Nothing, Sir Jacob."

"But there were two conditions. What is the other?"

"The other, Sir Jacob"—and here the young man blushed and hung down his head, pulling nervously at the table-cloth—"the other—the other—is this: I will sign the deed of partnership on the day when—your niece, Rose Escomb, accepts me as her husband."

"JOHN!" cried his father, "are you mad?"

Sir Jacob said nothing, but he looked steadily in the young man's face. Yes, he recognised a face which meant what it said: there was determination in it, and there was force.

"Do you know my niece?" he asked.

John answered, as they say always Orientals answer, by another question.

"How long has she been under your guardianship?"

"Seven years or so."

"Seven years. And before that she was *my* ward, Sir Jacob. While your brother lived she was my playfellow, my companion, my little sister, three years younger than I. We ran about the streets hand in hand, we went to school together, we kept holiday together. I loved her then, Sir Jacob, and I love her now."

"But suppose she does not love you? This is not a continental country. We do not arrange marriages to suit the convenience of old people as well as young. I can hardly, even though I am her uncle, go to Rose and say, 'Fall in love with John Gower.'"

"No; I do not suppose you can do that."

"Then what am I to do?"

"What you can—what you please. Is she engaged to any one else?"

"No," said Sir Jacob, with great decision. And, indeed, how was he to know that at that very moment Julian was leaning over the girl as she sat at her piano, breathing the perfume of her hair, and whispering a thousand pretty passionate things into her coral ear? He did not know; he did not even suspect. "No," he replied, "there is no engagement."

"Marry Rose?" gasped old Reuben, in sheer inability to comprehend the impudence of his son.

"Marry Rose," said John. "If you take your eyes off these mahogany splendours, and look at things in their real light, father, you will see that there is no reason why I should not marry Rose Escomb. Her father, you, and Sir Jacob all belonged to the same level. I am as well educated

as she; I am as clever; I shall be as rich. As rich? Far richer: for every pound that Sir Jacob has in his pocket to give her, I have a bill in *my* pocket of a hundred to put against it! And drawn at short dates too!"

All this was quite true, the only mistake made by the young engineer being in the statement that he was as well-educated as Rose. He was, in fact, better. Rose knew nothing of the differential and integral calculus. Rose knew nothing of machinery, nothing of German and French scientific works; Rose knew hardly anything. And yet, for a rich man's wife, her knowledge was worth everything, while for a rich man, and apart from the question of getting riches, his knowledge was worth nothing.

Rose knew the great, the ineffable mystery of being pleasant. John knew the invaluable, but not the charming, Art of success. Englishmen and Scotchmen are the only people in the world who succeed greatly. They are respected for possessing this talent, but they are not loved. John Gower was, therefore, by no means so well educated as Rose.

Sir Jacob was silent again. He looked through the diagrams once more, he examined his calculations.

Then he took his cigar, which had gone out, lighted it again, drew two or three whiffs, threw it away, drank another glass of port, all in a leisurely and not at all in a fidgety manner, and then, to Reuben's intense astonishment, he said quietly—

"I accept your offer, John Gower. There is my hand. As for Rose, I promise nothing. I shall not do more than mention the fact to her."

John said nothing. As he grasped the hand of the Baronet a soft suffusion filled his eyes. Surely his father was right when he insisted that Sir Jacob was the best as he was also the ablest of mankind.

"Reuben," said the chief, "go down to-morrow to the works. Call the men together, make them a conciliatory speech. Mind, no half measures. Say I am ready to meet them on their own ground: on their own ground. And at

once. Tell them that I am coming down directly, that all their grievances shall be attended to—you hear, you young John?—and that we shall light up the furnaces next week. Promise everything. And as for our talk of this morning," he murmured, "forget it. *I have found the way.* And now, old friend Reuben and partner John, one glass of wine to our future success. God bless you, John. You have begun as I did, with industry and audacity. They always succeed. Reuben, chap, you are happy in your son; and now—to the ladies. Rose will wonder what has become of you, John."

It was more than an hour after Julian and Mr. Bodkin had returned before the other three entered the drawing-room. "What had happened?" Rose thought. "Reuben Gower upright, and laughing at some joke; Sir Jacob, without his pomposity, had got his hand on John's shoulder and was laughing too; John alone was sheepish and hung his head. What did it mean?"

To Sir Jacob it meant that he would not be a bankrupt after all; to Reuben it meant that disgrace had been averted from the House; to John it meant fortune; to Rose—what did it mean to Rose?

"Rose," her uncle said, "will you play something to John Gower? I want you to be very good friends again with John Gower, your old friend of childhood."

CHAPTER V.

THE AWAKING.

THE guests were gone.

"Good-night, uncle."

"Good-night, Rose. Stay. I want to speak to you—no—no." A sudden pang touched Sir Jacob's heart. He could not tell her that night. By a certain instinct he knew that Rose and John Gower were of natures so opposed that she could never accept him willingly. Perhaps he suspected something of the real case as regards Julian Carteret. And

the girl was so bright and animated that night with the glow of new-born happiness on her cheeks that her uncle shrank from spoiling the sleep of happy dreams which she would have.

"Good-night, Mrs. Sampson."

He was left alone in his big drawing-room. He looked round it with a sigh of relief. Had he then been so near, so very near, the losing of all these things? There were the portfolios of water-colour drawings, each worth a thousand pounds. There were the pictures, all of which he fondly believed to be genuine, which he had hung upon the walls; there was the furniture, not ostentatious, but costly; above all there was the pride of possession, the feeling as he trod on the soft thick carpet that all this was his own, and going to remain his own. As he passed down the stairs to his study an unwonted shudder came upon him, a strange sense of past peril and providential rescue. He had had an uneasy dream as if he was to lose everything, and now that the dream had passed away the recollection was left behind, a painful memory. He would go into the study and have a glass of brandy-and-water with another cigar. He carried in his hands the specifications of the patent and laid them on the table, smoothing them tenderly with something like emotion in his eyes. These papers, these simple drawings, had they come a day later, they would not have been able to save him from destruction. Had they come a week or two earlier, he might have felt strong enough to refuse the young man's terms, if only as a punishment for his audacity. They came not a day too soon, nor a day too late. Was not this, he thought, a special and manifest interposition of Providence? Was it not by a miracle, visible only to himself and to Reuben Gower, that this arm should be stretched out to save when the waters were fast closing over his drowning head? He thought of his great speech on charity at the Hammerers' dinner, on the leading articles it had called forth, on the great Good it was doing, on his career as a philanthropist and Christian advocate, and he felt that it was more than probable—it was certain—and it

was deserved. The brandy-and-water, not weak but strong, and the cigar strengthened and intensified this feeling. For whom should special miracles be wrought, if not for the man who does Good? Who should look for the interposition of Providence but a man like himself? Was he not regarded by the whole of the religious and benevolent world as a pillar and a prop? Was he not, in reality, a pillar and a prop? Why, but for his speeches, for his advocacy, for his eloquence, for his practical advice, how many societies and institutions must have gone lame and halt? A miracle, a special miracle, wrought in these latter days for the behalf of a good man. It was deserved.

A happy night for all. Rose in her room, her cheek on the pillow, her eyes closed, dreaming of the sweetness of newly-born love; Mrs. Sampson dwelling on the comforts of a home and a husband, and wondering perhaps whether Henry Bodkin after all would turn out quite what she once expected and hoped of him; Sir Jacob himself, full of old port, brandy-and-water, good cigars, and a happy conscience, giving melodious expression to a calm and blissful sleep, trumpeting forth his praises for a special Interposition. A happy night for all.

But, for one, a sad awakening.

It was after breakfast that Sir Jacob, who was early, told Rose that he had something important to say.

He would see her in the study, where, he reflected, he could sit with much greater dignity at his own table and before his papers than in the breakfast-room. The room was large, like all the rooms in his house, and furnished on all sides with books. Their titles were on their backs, like invitations to come and read them; but no one ever touched the books in Sir Jacob's library, not even their owner. The great contractor was not a man of books, save when he was looking up some point in machinery, when he wanted books of reference. All the imaginative part of literature was foreign to his experience and his sympathies. He cared for neither history, poetry, nor fiction. He never read. If he sat alone all the evening, as he frequently did, his cigar was

his only companion, except perhaps a note-book or a pencil and a sheet of paper. For when Sir Jacob was alone he had plenty to think about. To make speeches on a platform, to preside at a meeting, to be a great man at a City dinner, these were the recreations which unbent his mind and set up his nerves, as a run among the mountains, or a month by the sea-side with a few dozen novels, sets up the nerves of other men. There was a massive mahogany table with leather cover, on which were his own papers. There was another table covered with big portfolios of maps. There were more portfolios on stands, and there were more on chairs. He sat, for his own part, in a wooden chair, with wooden arms, black with long use, and in this position, half turned from the table, as if his business with his visitor was of the most trifling nature compared with that in the paper which lay before him, he showed a presence of surpassing dignity.

"Sit down, my dear Rose," he began blandly, "or if you would prefer standing, come a little nearer. I want to speak to you seriously about a matter which deeply concerns your own happiness."

"Yes, uncle." Had Julian already spoken?

"You are now nineteen, an age when some girls are already married. It is almost time to talk about things, is it not? That is, as I have a definite proposal to lay before you, I think it is not premature. Not, my dear child, that I am anxious for you to leave me, and your departure will very likely be followed by the break up of my house, which will be dull indeed after you are gone."

"My departure?" Julian *must* have spoken to him already.

"I have a proposal, Rose, for your hand, of which I beg your very careful and—and—Prayerful consideration. It is from a young man not a great deal older than yourself, who will be rich—perhaps very rich, as the world speaks of wealth. He has long loved you, he tells me. I have known him for many years, say from infancy, and know his life, in the midst of the usual temptations which beset the young,

to have been everything that one could desire. He has not yet, it is true, acquired those just ideas on charitable and benevolent responsibilities which should always attach to the rich; but that will doubtless come. He presses for an immediate answer. What do you say, Rose?"

"But who is it? You have not told me his name." As if there was any reason to ask; as if every word in Sir Jacob's description did not apply exactly to Julian Carteret —young—rich—life in midst of temptations. And then, there could be no one else.

"Who is it, uncle?" She was blushing, but she was happy, and her happiness showed itself in her eyes.

"The son of my secretary and old school friend, John Gower—what is the matter, Rose?"

For in a moment the light went out of her eyes and the sunshine out of her face.

"John Gower?" she cried, as if struck with some heavy blow.

"John Gower," Sir Jacob repeated slowly. "Is that name one that you did not expect?"

"But I cannot marry him," she began. "O uncle! I am so sorry?"

"Why not? Not marry John Gower? And why are you sorry?"

"Because—because Julian Carteret asked me yesterday to be his wife, and I consented; and I thought he had been already talking to you about it."

"Julian Carteret has proposed to you? And without my sanction? Is that possible?" Sir Jacob spoke as if all love-making was carried on with the previous permission of parents and guardians, and that no one tells a pretty girl how very nice she is without first going to her papa. "Without my sanction! I could not have believed this possible in my ward, Julian Carteret. And only yesterday!" As if that fact enhanced the wickedness of the proceeding enormously. "I am to understand that you, to whom I have been for the last seven years a second father, to whom you owe everything in the world, have actually—

ACTUALLY—promised yourself to a man clandestinely and without consulting me? Is this possible?" He looked round as if the walls were listening, and would echo his surprise.

"Not quite that, my dear uncle," said Rose gently. "Julian was to speak to you immediately. It depends upon your consent."

"Then understand," said Sir Jacob firmly, "that under no circumstances will my consent be given—under—no—circumstances."

"Why not?" Rose asked. She was gentle as a gazelle on ordinary occasions, but now she was hurt and angry. "He is always here, with your permission. You have allowed him to come when he pleases, and stay as long as he likes. If you had any objections, why did you not warn him or me beforehand?"

"I give no reasons. That is my answer. And now, Rose, your answer, please, to John Gower."

"I said I could not marry him," she said. "That is my answer." Something of the North Country pluck mantled to her cheeks. "You can be cruel and unreasoning. I will be unreasoning, if I am not cruel. And if I am not to marry Julian I will never marry John Gower."

"This from the girl I have taken to my heart," sighed her uncle gently. "Rose, are you yourself? are you in your right mind?"

"I am both. I will not marry John Gower. I thank you for all you have done for me; but if you insist on—on *that* —I will accept no more from you and go away."

"With Julian."

"If Julian will take me, I will," she said.

Sir Jacob looked steadily in her face. She reminded him of himself, of his brother. In his heart he was proud that she was obstinate and true; but—but she must be made to give way.

"You had thirty thousand pounds left to you by Lady Escomb," he said softly. "You are aware that it was left under a special condition—that unless you marry with my

permission all this money comes back to me. You will, therefore, go to Julian penniless."

"He does not want my money," she said proudly; "Julian wants me."

"Girl"—her uncle changed his tone suddenly—"we are playing with each other, you and I. I think you *will* marry John Gower when I tell you a little story—to be kept entirely to yourself. I hoped not to tell you the story at all; but it has been forced upon me by your disobedience and wilfulness. Blame yourself, then, for the great pain that this story will give you. Blame yourself, and not me.

"The position of a great contractor is a precarious one. If at any time he fails to command the immediate disposal of large sums of money he is lost. He depends upon the assistance of the banks. The banks look for securities. Seven years ago that position faced me. I had no money. I had no more securities. I could get no help from the banks. But there was then in my hands one resource. I held in trust Julian Carteret's fortune, amounting to £70,000. I took it from the funds and transferred it—in fact, invested it—invested it, Rose, in my own business, and by its help sailed safely through the storm without loss or danger to my ward by the investment." He kept repeating the word investment as if it comforted him—it did. "The same position is before me again. Unless I can succeed within ten days or so in raising very considerable sums of money, too large for you to understand, the danger will become a disaster, and I shall be a bankrupt. All—all"—he spread his hands before him—"all will be lost."

"All? Including Julian's money?"

"Including Julian's money. He will be a beggar. I shall be a beggar. You will be a beggar. All these things will be sold. All the people whom I employ—the thousands of people—will be turned destitute into the streets, because I shall not even be able to pay their wages."

She stared at him blankly. All beggars together? And Julian too?

"If you marry this idle and helpless lover of yours, who

cannot dig and is ashamed to beg, you will have a life of absolute poverty and privation, aggravated by the reproaches of your husband on me as the author of your misfortunes. You will, when you come to your senses, remember that my misery, Reuben Gower's misery, the misery of all the thousands turned upon the world, is your own doing—your own."

"Mine—mine?" She was very pale and trembling. "How is it mine?"

"Yes; all of your own selfish determination to have your own way—in what you thought the pleasant way."

"But how—how can I help it?"

"By marrying John Gower. See these papers. You do not understand their significance, and I have no time or the heart to explain them. But they are his, and by consenting to marry him, you give them to me. On these papers, which contain the particulars of a great invention, I can raise enough to tide over the storm and make you all rich again. This is not a doubtful matter, Rose: if it were I would not ask you to accept this young engineer, rough and rude as he is. It is a certainty—a certainty. You understand me clearly? I repeat it, so that there shall be no mistake possible. John Gower offers to make me a sharer in this invention, which will be put into practice at once at my own works. His conditions are a half-partnership in the works and—your hand. Now you understand. Accept, and all will be well. Refuse, and the misery that will follow is your own doing. I give you these papers, Rose. I shall return in ten minutes. If you put them back upon the table, I shall never reproach you, but that act will make us all beggars. If you give them to me, you will give yourself to John Gower."

He placed in her hand the packet of plans, and left her alone in the room.

The windows looked out upon the gardens. It was half-past nine in the morning, a beautiful morning, thought Rose; all sorts of impertinent things which had no business in her brain at the time crowding across her mind, and then she began to try and think.

To think—but how? How could she understand all in a moment the thing her uncle had put before her in its cold and naked horror? Ruin? Was such a thing possible to such a man? Had he known for long that it was coming? Had he, actually knowing it, made those speeches about the duties of wealthy men? Her brain reeled.

She had to make a decision. Stay! let her fix her mind on one thing—only one thing. What should it be? Sir Jacob ruined, her uncle and herself walking out of the grand house, and going to live—where? In some miserable hiding-place on the charity of their old friends: Rose's ideas of a great man's bankruptcy and its consequences were elementary. Then Julian ruined too. And what would he—that helpless, indolent man of the world—find to do? Reuben Gower—faithful Reuben, who loved her so much, and had worked so well for her uncle—he would be ruined as well. And then all the poor people—the factory hands, the navvies on the railways, the clerks in the offices, from low to high—all to be driven out into the streets, ruined, without pay for work done, and without work to do!

As she stood, the papers in her hand, trying to think what ought to be done, a shadow darkened the window, and she looked up.

The windows of the study were glass doors, which opened into the garden. One of them was open, and in it was standing Julian Carteret. He was come to make his formal proposal to Sir Jacob. This is always a serious thing to do, because, for some reason, a man always feels himself, while he is doing it, in a false position. I think the reason is that he is obliged for the moment to see himself as others see him—to strip off the trappings of imagination. But in Julian's case the matter was simple. Sir Jacob knew his whole affairs. He had to answer two questions, and only to ask one. Still he was embarrassed by the prospect of the interview, and it was a delightful surprise to find Rose in her uncle's place.

"Rose," he cried, "I thought to find Sir Jacob here, and I find you. I have been breakfasting early, and making up

my little speech to your uncle. Happy transformation. May I come in?"

"Go away." She spoke with a hoarse voice, trembling with emotion. "Go away, Julian."

"Go away, Rose? Without a word with you first? Never!"

He seized her unresisting hand, and was proceeding further in the direction common among lovers, when he was struck by her pallor and the trembling of her lips.

"What is it, Rose?" he asked.

"Go away, Julian," she repeated. "Oh, for Heaven's sake, go away!"

"Has anything happened?"

"Anything?" she echoed in despairing tones. "What has not happened?"

"What is it? Tell me, Rose."

"I cannot tell you. Go away, Julian—only go away!"

"I will go, if I must, but I will come back. When will you see me again? Oh, my dear Rose, I cannot bear to think of you in suffering. And tell me what this means? May I come this afternoon?"

"Yes, only go away now. Go away, Julian."

That was all she had to say. She had no longer the privilege and the right to keep him near her. If she married him he was ruined, and by that act. If she refused him, better to let him know it at once, and blame her while his love-dream was yet young.

As Julian left the room, he turned to once more look at the girl he loved. She was standing just as when he saw her first through the window, motionless, her eyes gazing before her, and seeing nothing, a bundle of papers in her hand.

What did it mean? What could it mean? The girl whom he had left so blithe and happy the night before, whom he had made happier by his wooing, was standing there alone, spiritless, crushed by some misfortune, and able only to bid him go away. What did it mean?

Well, he would obey. He would go away, and come back in the afternoon to try and find out this mystery.

He went away sadly. Rose heard his step upon the gravel walk, every footfall a fresh agony, and tried to return to her thinking.

What a decision! And yet—it flashed before her in a moment—what doubt as to the step she should take? Julian ruined, and by her? All these people ruined, and by her? That could not be.

The ten minutes had gone. Her uncle returned, and she met his look of inquiry with a forced smile.

"Well, Rose, what will you do with those papers?"

"I will give them back to you," she whispered.

He took them, and kissed her with a little emotion.

"You are a good girl, Rose—a good girl, and you shall never repent your decision. The mushroom passion of yesterday against the misery of thousands: what other decision could I expect? For myself, my girl, I care little. The applause of conscience is all I seek; that, at least, will not desert me, whatever fate may have in store. I would have gone out into the world as poor as when I began life; I could have borne without a murmur the pinches of poverty: all things are sent to us: we must accept them and go on, doing Good as best we may. But for the thousands who depend on me I care a great deal. Rose, in their name I thank you."

But she said nothing, standing rigid and pale, with her hands clasped. She was thinking of Julian's footstep on the gravel. Sir Jacob's phrases fell unnoticed on her ear.

"John Gower will call this afternoon, Rose. You will be kind to him, and—and if you cannot be warm, do not be repellent. Think of the victory you have achieved over yourself; think now of that which has yet to be won by promising what we hope, indeed, you will be able to perform. Prepare yourself to be told a love tale of a different kind to Julian Carteret's. And when Julian comes to me, I shall know how to dismiss him. Poor Rose! it is hard on you; but, after all, you are young. This is only one of the many disappointments which are bestowed upon us, to strengthen faith and nerve the heart to duty."

Mere phrases—Sir Jacob had his quiver full of them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW LOVER.

IT was a quiet house that morning, the villa on Campden Hill. When Sir Jacob drove off to town, Rose retired to her own rooms, and Mrs. Sampson was left alone. She sent up a message to Rose. Miss Escomb was very sorry, but she had a bad headache, and would like to be left quite by herself. There was no Julian Carteret, for a wonder. Had there been, thought the lady of experience, a quarrel? This was hardly likely.

She roamed about the great house, in the drawing-room, with its new-fashioned adornment, its dado, black furniture, looped curtains, and china cabinets; in the dining-room, massive and solemn, with pictures of game and fruit. How can any one take permanent pleasure in pictures of game and fruit? And how is it that a dead hare must always be flanked by a pile of purple grapes? As a matter of fact, a fruiterer is one thing, a poulterer is another; a hare comes at one period of dinner, and the fruit at another. She looked into the library, where the books in thousands seemed to clamour for a little change—crying out aloud to be taken down from their dull and stately prison to be read—to be read—only to be read. Don't you think sometimes that books are living creatures, who long for sympathy? And if so, what must be the sorrow and suffering of the forgotten novels? Then Mrs. Sampson, restless and uneasy, strolled round the gardens and inspected the greenhouses, where the vines, the peaches, and the wall-fruit made Campden Hill famous.

Then she came back, feeling depressed and restless.

It was not that she had misgivings about Bodkin. Not at all. It was something which Sir Jacob had said the day before.

Could he have meant anything?

That was the trouble in her mind.

Could Sir Jacob have meant what, undoubtedly, was a natural interpretation of his words? Did he really contemplate matrimony again? And—oh! rapturous thought—matrimony is impossible without a consenting pair: was she herself to form the other member of that couple?

To be Lady Escomb!

I defy any woman in a certain rank of life to contemplate the possibility of gaining a title without an emotion which even surpasses the rapture of feeling yourself perfectly well dressed. In the rank of life to which I refer, no one ever is perfectly well dressed, and so the comparison does not hold. A title! Lady Escomb—Lady Jones—Lady Brown—Lady Plantagenet de Johnes—Lady de Vere de Browyne! Ecstasy!

To be Lady Escomb!

And yet he seemed to mean it. Dear Sir Jacob! The widow, widowed a second time, sighed and purred. Dear Sir Jacob! so great, so rich, and such a good man!

But Bodkin!

Well, true, Bodkin was a little in the way. Bodkin might, however, be played with. It was not the first time that Bodkin had been made to wait. Bodkin was her first lover; but there came the real necessity, if comfort is a necessity, of marrying old Mr. Chiltern. Bodkin was her lover in her first widowhood.

Then came Bodkin's dreadful bankruptcy, and the offer from Augustus Sampson—dear, hot-headed Augustus.

Now she was free again, and Bodkin seemed sure of success. Poor Bodkin! always so sanguine, always so ready to work, so willing to hope, so very, very, very unsuccessful. What, after all, could be hoped from a man so unlucky as Bodkin? And what a dreadful thing to have to fall back upon her own little income to provide for the hungry Bodkin as well as herself. Then she sat down and began to calculate.

She had three hundred a year of her own, thanks to the united efforts of her Chiltern and her Augustus. Bodkin was going to make, say, five hundred out of the Society.

Five and three make eight. At their age, she thought with a prudent modesty which might, had Bodkin been present, have sent the maidenly blush mantling to her cheek, there was not much reason to anticipate—a large family. Say, eight hundred a year for the pair. Well: eight hundred a year: a villa somewhere near Regent's Park, on the north-west side: a villa with small rooms, not stately rooms like those of Sir Jacob's: furnished with red carpet, red curtains, and no pictures—not like the furniture of Campden Villa: no carriage, but an occasional brougham, and cabs—frowsy cabs: no great dinner-parties, where the light fell broken on brightly coloured glass, and was softly refracted on the velvet skin of peaches and the bloom of grapes, where servants moved softly about on the most noiseless of carpets, where the talk was of things rich, good, comfortable, and reassuring. None of these things: only Henry Bodkin with his jolly red face staring at one over a roast leg of mutton, a red-armed girl for a waitress, for guests some old friends of the old times, perhaps in the bagman line; for wine, hot sherry and brandied port: and after dinner, instead of the drawing-room with its soft lamps, music, tea, and gentle talk, Henry Bodkin and his friend sitting at opposite sides of the fireplace, smoking pipes and drinking brandy-and-water.

But did Sir Jacob mean anything?

And then she pictured herself the chatelaine of this splendid house—Lady Escomb: she swept in fancy across the carpets; she revelled in the sense, the imaginary sense—that is a sixth sense—of power, riches, and envied splendour. She felt herself equal to the post: she saw herself receiving Sir Jacob's guests, dispensing his hospitalities, and rejoicing in his greatness.

It was not a morning dream which would altogether have pleased Bodkin; but she gave the reins to her imagination, and as he never knew it, so he never grieved over it. That is the feminine motto in all ages: "He will never know, and so he won't grieve over it."

Mrs. Sampson, though past forty, was undeniably still a

woman of some personal comeliness. She was stout, it is true, but not more stout than is becoming at that age, and she had a pleasant face still, with a certain shrewdness about the eyes which gave her an expression somewhat unusual, and therefore attractive. If the great Wellerian theory be true, that more widows are married than single women, then it will be found on investigation that widows go off most readily at forty.

She had the morning entirely to herself. About a quarter of an hour before luncheon her lover presented himself. He was flushed and hot—came in wiping his forehead with a handkerchief, so unlike the calm, cold, and judicial Sir Jacob. "Lavinia," he cried, "you are quite alone, all alone? Like a Female Robinson Crusoe of quite the loveliest kind, born to blush unseen. 'When on those cheeks where rose and lily meet,' as the poet says. 'When on those cheeks where rose and lily meet——'"

"Henry, the servants may listen. Miss Escomb may be within hearing. Pray compose yourself."

"I can't, Lavinia, I really can't. I've great news for you, the greatest news. The Society is formed: a list of the committee has been drawn up by Lord Addlehede. I am secretary: five hundred pounds a year—tol de lol—'five hundred pounds a year and a heart both light and clear.' Is that right? Lord Addlehede finds all the expenses for the first year. The enemies of that philanthropic nobleman declare that he is cracked. To be sure, his manner is a little nervous, but that is from zeal in the good cause. And I put it to you, Lavinia, what greater proof of his lordship's sanity can there be than the undeniable fact that he has appointed me the secretary of the new Society?"

"What indeed, Henry?"

"Cracked, indeed! A little nervous in his manner, as I said: and his eyes are sometimes a little wild. But all pure zeal, Lavvy—my Lavvy—name the day."

"Henry!" She was, as had happened twice previously with this swain, quite carried away by the ardour of his wooing. "Henry, always the impetuous."

"Name the day, Lavinia. Oh! would she but name the day on which I might call her mine! And not Henry any more, Lavinia. Henry is associated with trade, with patent pills, with bankruptcy: call me by my second name, Theophilus. If it were not for the associations of the name, I would say, 'Call me Henry, call me Jack; call me blue or call me black—call me Theophilus or Doris, call me Sam or call me Chloris—only—only—call me thine.'"

Who could be proof against pleading so impassioned?

"I really do think, Henry—I mean Theophilus—that you love me," said Mrs. Sampson. "And now I suppose——"

"Now, Lavinia, the happiness of my life is to be accomplished, like the roofing of a house, and we ought to hang out a flag. Ah! the history of Theophilus and Lavinia—Paul and Virginia—is the history of many engagements. I came, like Cæsar: I saw, like Caius Julius Cæsar; I conquered, also like C. J. C. Then I was defeated, unlike that commander: then I conquered again. Once more the enemy was too strong. Augustus the Great was master of the fort. Again I retreated. Again I present myself. Lower the portcullis: blow the trumpets: the fort surrenders."

"Henry!—I mean Theophilus."

By this time he had his arm round her waist, as far as it would go, and was timing his sentences by nothing less than kisses on her cheek.

"And now we are actually going to be married, Lavinia, after so many disappointments, it is not unnatural that one should feel the suddenness of the thing. It takes me in the legs. When I think of it they go groggy. Where do you feel it?"

"Henry—I mean Theophilus—in the head."

"I can hardly believe my own happiness. There is sure to be another cup between the slip and the lip. I mean, of course, Lavinia—only one is nervous on such an occasion—another lip between the cup and the slip. Another lip? Whose lip! Let me have his blood."

"Tranquillise yourself, dear Henry—I mean Theophilus."

"Twice already has the bowl been raised to my lips, twice

to be dashed away. I should have been called Tantalus Bodkin. Tantalus! How well it would look at the bottom of a new prospectus! Tantalus Bodkin, Esq., Bank Side, Hades, secretary *ad interim*."

"Come, Theophilus, do not be nervous. Will you stay to luncheon?"

"I cannot, Lavinia, I really cannot, I have so much to do."

"Then let me ring for a glass of sherry?"

"You may, Lavinia; and, if I may venture a hint from my own experience, it will be to ask, not for the Deputation Sherry, which I know too well, but for some of Sir Jacob's own."

Lavinia smiled and rang the bell, and gave the directions. The sherry was brought, and with it, though not, so to speak, a part of it, came Reuben Gower with John.

"You are in time, Mr. Gower," said Bodkin enthusiastically, "to drink a glass of sherry with me. This is *not* the Deputation Sherry, I assure you, but some of Sir Jacob's own particular. See how it sticks to the side of the glass, oily, and what a perfume! Nutty!" All this time he was rolling the glass round in his fingers. "The Spanish walnut seems to have lent its choicest flavour to the Spanish grape. Take a glass, Mr. Gower, if I, a guest myself, may invite you. Did you ever consider Matrimony, Mr. Gower—you have been, I infer from the presence of your son, a married man? A son is not an unusual result — did you ever consider Matrimony in the light of the wine of Life?"

"I never did," said Reuben rather shortly. He had little imagination.

"Then begin to consider it in that light. If you marry too young it is champagne; perhaps too sweet, but always full of fizz. The wine changes as you grow older. When you arrive at my time of life you are at the burgundy or the dry sherry stage. This is the dry sherry, in fact. You hold the generous vintage to your lips, and you drink it to the full enjoym——"

Here, to his infinite consternation, the glass fell from his hand, and was shivered into twenty pieces on the floor.

"The slip," he cried, turning pale. "The slip between the cup and the lip. I knew it."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Sampson; "that was an accident. Take another glass."

"No, no more; I have had enough. I must get back to the office to see if anything dreadful has happened."

"Really," said Mrs. Sampson, "you are too superstitious."

Mr. Bodkin shook his hand and buttoned his coat sadly. As he was looking round for his hat, Charles the footman brought him a telegram. With pale cheeks and trembling hands he tore it open.

One moment, and the paper fell fluttering to the ground, while he stood stupefied, eyes and mouth wide open, speechless.

"What is it, man?" cried Reuben. "Are you struck silly?"

"Worse than that, Gower," said Bodkin; "I am struck poor, I am ruined."

"Ruined, Theophilus—Henry?" cried Mrs. Sampson.

"The slip between the cup and the lip," he murmured. "What a devil of a slip! what a glorious cup! what a delicious lip to lose with that cup! Lavinia's lips! Lavinia, for the third time we are parted."

"What is it?" she asked again.

"This telegram." He picked it up, and put on his gold double eye-glasses to give effect to the reading. "This telegram"—he looked round, patting it with the emphasis of an undertaker in the exercise of his trade—"this telegram, my friends, announces no less stupendous an event than the removal of Lord Addlehede to a private lunatic asylum. It was effected this morning. The stoppage of the first year's preliminary expenses is a natural consequence. I need return to the office no more."

"But is there no one else in your council who will find the expenses?" asked Mrs. Sampson.

"No one, Lavinia: there is no one else in the council at all as yet. Lord Addlehede! poor Lord Addlehede!"—Bodkin raised his handkerchief to his eyes—"was the president, the treasurer, the committee, all rolled into one. We

had as yet only drawn up a written list of committee. I was the secretary. Fortunately I did get a quarter's salary in advance. And, by great good luck, the check is already cashed. Poor Lord Addlehede! There have been many other philanthropic nobleman, but none so abundantly gullible as he. And I had him in lavender, all to myself."

"And what was this society?" asked John. "Was it to do any good to anybody?"

"Yes, sir," said Bodkin savagely. "It was to do good to a penniless adventurer: to me, sir, to me. All the societies exist to support their secretary, or to push forward their chairman and committee. Mine was the youngest of the bubbles."

"I regret to hear, Bodkin," said Sir Jacob solemnly—he had arrived without being heard by Bodkin—"that you have induced me to lend my name—MINE—to a—a—a—BUBBLE. A Bubble Society I presume to be one whose objects are not worthy of being carried out, or one whose objects are only a pretence. It is needless to say how much you are lowered in my estimation by such a connection—avowed, too—an open, barefaced connection with a Bubble Society! This is indeed a depth of moral turpitude which I confess I can hardly bring myself to fathom!"

Bodkin was extinguished. He bowed his head before the storm.

"Moral turpitude!" he echoed. "You were never poor, Sir Jacob."

"Poor! I was penniless," rejoined the good man cheerfully. "And I resolved to get rich. How does one get rich? You can answer that question, Reuben, for me. By resolving to get rich."

"Ay, ay!" said Reuben, rubbing his hands as if he was congratulating himself over his own good fortune. "Ay, fortune came at a full tide."

"A tide," said Sir Jacob, "that has had its ebb occasionally, but a full tide."

Mrs. Sampson was sitting during this talk as far from Mr. Bodkin as the limits of the sofa would allow her to go. It was evident to Bodkin that the third chance was gone.

He looked at her and then at Sir Jacob, and said with a humorous twist of his features—

"Something ought to be done about these tides. It is always ebb tide with me."

"If Sir Jacob," said Mrs. Sampson softly—and it seemed to Bodkin like the well-known voice which had greeted in succession the late Mr. Chiltern and the late Mr. Sampson —"if Sir Jacob cannot control the action of fortune's tide, who can?"

Said Sir Jacob: "Thank you, Mrs. Sampson. Truly, yes. I am grateful to say that I have been enabled to recognise the duties of wealth, which is the main secret of controlling these tides. I have lived, my friends, mainly for doing good. Not by—by BUBBLE Societies, Bodkin. To do good we must make money."

"Else," said Bodkin, growing desperate, "what would become of the secretaries?"

Mrs. Sampson rose from the couch as one in a kind of rapture. "Sir Jacob's noble sentiment," she said, "expresses the GREAT HEART of England. We make money in order that we may do good. That is the reason why whenever anything happens the generous impulse is obeyed of getting up a subscription."

"Very neatly put, Mrs. Sampson," said Sir Jacob. "The Great Heart of England. Yes. We now sit at home and subscribe. We no longer fight with our enemies, we no longer send out armies and navies for the protection of old allies, we subscribe—the Great Heart of England subscribes: what a noble thing this is! Bodkin, secretary of a BUBBLE Society. Take heed of these words. Deserving objects are founded by properly-paid agents. It is then only a question of subscription: we provide the money, and, by a beautiful arrangement, all the objects of philanthropy are attained without disagreeable contact with actual suffering."

Bodkin was crushed, but he was still present, and even a worm will sometimes turn—he turned.

"The good Samaritan," he said, "pays somebody else to hire the ass, and carry off the wounded man."

"Eh—h?" asked Sir Jacob.

"And the glow of virtue is just the same," said Bodkin.

"Come, Bodkin," said Reuben; "you have got rid of a bubble. Well, never mind, have done with bubbles. Work!"

"I can't," Bodkin replied; "I don't know the spoke of a wheel from the axle. 'These little hands,'" he spread out his enormous red palms, "'These little hands,' as the poet says, 'were never made to dabble in the iron trade.' I will find another bubble. I will invent a new society, start a club, run a show, do something."

"Try," said Reuben, "to be a workman among the rest, Bodkin; leave bubbles for rogues."

"I have already, Mr. Bodkin," said Sir Jacob pointedly, "more than hinted that the word 'bubble' is personally offensive to me. Let me repeat that nothing but your own assurance that the society was established on the firmest basis would have induced me to become a member of its committee."

"And nothing—nothing, Henry" (Mrs. Sampson pulled out her pocket-handkerchief), "would have persuaded me to listen to your proposals, had I not thought that your schemes had the firmest financial support."

"Be consoled, madam," said Sir Jacob, taking her hand, which he held.

At sight of this last outrage, Mr. Bodkin lost command of himself. He turned pale, he straightened himself, he held his hat in one hand and his gloves in the other, and, with head erect, quite as a man might do who had not been concerned in bubble societies, he made a little speech.

"Sir Jacob Escomb," he said, beginning in a very low voice, but gradually warming as he went along, "you, who know how to conduct the worship of God and Mammon, are sure to command respect. Go on doing good. As for poor Lord Addlehede, he was a fool if you like; but he was a gentleman, and he tried his best to alleviate the misery of the world. He took his lead from such men as you. You subscribe to everybody's charity that men like me start. You set us agoing. You like to see your name, with half a dozen

lords, on a committee list, and the lords think, because they are gentlemen, and therefore easily deluded, that it is out of pure philanthropy. You round on me because my scheme has failed; you welcomed me when you thought it might end in a friendship with Lord Addlehede. Did you inquire into the society, Sir Jacob? Did you ascertain that it rested on a sound financial basis? Not at all. You asked who was president, and you consented to become vice-president. Poor Lord Addlehede! They have locked him up, and I daresay it was quite time. He was not so clever as you, but up to his lights he was an honourable gentleman, sincere and loyal. Your income, Sir Jacob, may be as sound as the Bank of England, but your charity is a bubble. Do you hear the truth for once? It is a bubble. I am a humbug because I am poor; you, Sir Jacob, because you are rich.—Lavinia, a long farewell."

He escaped in the confusion which his declamation created around. When the people felt that they were recovering a little, he was gone.

"Forget his words, Sir Jacob." It was Mrs. Sampson who spoke. "You, at least, can afford to forget and forgive."

He might forgive and forget, but he would still fume, and did fume, walking about, swinging his arms, and gesticulating.

Presently, however, no one interfering, he grew calm. Reuben Gower was very silent. He had sat quite still, making no sign, while Bodkin made his oration. His son John, on the other hand, made no disguise of the boredom of the whole thing. What did it matter to him, the practical engineer, whether Sir Jacob was a humbug philanthropist or not? It had nothing to do with him. His head was full of other things. But Reuben looked sad.

Sir Jacob laughed—the laugh which the discomfited adopt—an unreal, hollow sort of laugh.

"What such a man says," he said slowly, "makes no difference to any of us. You agree with me, Mrs. Sampson?"

"Perfectly, Sir Jacob."

"Quite so, and therefore — and therefore—— John Gower, you and I will go into the library. Mrs. Sampson, might I ask you to have the goodness to ask my niece to step into the library?"

"I bring you, John Gower," said Sir Jacob airily, "a young lady to whom, I believe, you have something of importance to communicate, and I leave her with you in order that you may say it. I have already partly prepared her for what you have to say. But you are old friends, and that, we know, is the best preparation for—for such communications."

The library door closed behind him, and Rose was left to meet her fate.

Opposite her stood the man whom she was to marry.

He was a good-looking, stalwart young fellow, with a resolute bearing, and eyes that you could trust. She knew his character well, how straightforward he was, how determined. He had been her playmate and protector in childhood, her companion every day, and sometimes all day long, until seven years before, when her father died, and she then became her uncle's charge. John Gower was the creature in the world whom she had, then, most loved in her innocent childish way. But that kind of love was not what John Gower wanted; and even the friendship, the survival of the old love—a languid plant—after so long a separation seemed cold and dead in her heart, crushed out by the resentments which were burning within her against a man who could so use his power as to force himself upon her against her will. In her eyes he was a man wicked enough to set her happiness against the life-blood of thousands to win his way—a selfish inclination.

She did not understand at all. John, in his rough, simple way, took it for granted that the kisses with which they had parted, as boy and girl, were burning still upon her lips as on his: that the girl kept alive in her heart, as he did in his own, the old childish affection grown with her growth into the love of a woman for a man: that she thought of him, as he of her, with an ever-increasing love and desire. He judged the girl's heart—it is a mistake men generally commit—by

his own. He was unused to the ways and wiles of the world. He could not, had he been told, understand how widely divergent had been their paths, and how the old image was completely obliterated from the girl's mind.

Consider: from a rough life in a manufacturing town, among people but a step removed from the factory hands themselves, Rose had been transplanted to a fashionable girl's school. There she learned, if nothing else, the tone of the social station to which she was about to belong. She imbibed the ideas prevalent among young ladies on all points. That these are not always healthy ideas need not be stated. She came from school with a great dislike of the rough sides of life. Work and the necessity for work, either with men or women, seemed to her, though she would not have put the idea into words, a kind of disgrace—mind, that *is* the natural result of a fashionable girls' school. Earnestness seemed ridiculous. She loved the light, half-in-earnest, half-in-jest, conversation which could be best enjoyed with such clever butterflies as Julian Carteret. No one makes the idle life appear so beautiful, although it must be really very dull, as your clever idler. She liked art. She liked to be surrounded by the atmosphere which surrounds and clings to things beautiful, and things æsthetic. She liked the march of life to be directed where pleasant prospects can be gained without fatigue, and where you are never beyond the sound of music.

In other words, she was a fit wife for Julian Carteret, but would never mate with John Gower.

And now, too, because she did not understand, again, how he had forced his way upwards in the world, she remembered the wretched unloveliness of the square, red brick streets, all alike, all ungraced by any single redeeming feature of beauty, smirched with smoke, with squalid fronts, squalid roads, squalid gutters, squalid children, squalid men, and squalid women. And was she to give up all the things which made life a joy, and go to live again among the old surroundings?

And yet, if she refused, Julian would lose his all: her uncle would be ruined: the people would be beggars——

"Rose," said John Gower softly, but with an air of confidence which made her bitter heart more angry and bitter, "you know what I am going to say to you."

"Sir Jacob has told me," she replied quietly.

"It was only yesterday that I was able to tell him," he went on, as if Rose had been longing for the moment to arrive. "Only yesterday that I was really in a position to demand my own terms. You remember, Rose, how we parted some years ago?"

"Yes, I remember." Her tone was cold, and had but little encouragement in it, but John did not observe this. Being an active man, who brought an intense eagerness to his own work, on which his thoughts were always concentrated, he was not largely gifted with sympathetic perception: and when he had made up his own mind that another person was thinking, acting, or disposed to act in a particular way, nothing but direct ocular proof to the contrary would drive him from his belief. People who work on things which entirely seize upon and occupy the brain are not generally observant of others. "Very clever men," said a young lady to me once, *à propos* of a great philosopher, "are so often extremely stupid." John Gower was extremely stupid, incomprehensibly stupid. Had he looked at her with eyes of understanding, he would have seen that her heart was changed. But his eyes were blurred with the mist of his own fancy, and he saw nothing as it was.

"Only yesterday: and after seven years of waiting. It seems long, doesn't it looking back? But the time has come at last, Rose. I have worked hard for it. Be sure that the goal was always in my mind—when you laid your hands upon my shoulders and held up your face to be kissed, seven years ago, promising that you would always love me, you gave me such a stimulus for work as no other man ever had—the hope of winning you. There was no time for dreaming about happiness and all that. I put away such things in a corner. I said to myself, 'If you get on, John Gower, you may be able to marry the girl who loves you. It is your duty to work hard.'"

She made no kind of reply. What was there to say? She took no kind of interest in his struggles.

"Well, Rose, I did work hard. I think there is no one in the whole North of England who has worked so hard as I have. For I had so much to do. From six to six in the works. That was learning the machinery: getting to understand every nerve and muscle in the anatomy of that great steam monster who does our work for us. I learned him at last, and then I began to see how he could be improved. All the evenings I spent teaching myself other things, French and German, so as to read scientific books: mathematics, all sorts of things, without which a mechanical engineer is not worth his salt. So the time went on, and was not tedious. After my articles were got through I stayed on at the works with a salary. That helped me too, for it is always best to be among the best kind of machinery. And then suddenly, because you were still a long way off, there came to me—my idea."

His idea! Rose looked at the pile of papers which she had held in her hands. That idea, then, was her fate. She wished that it had never been framed, or had been forgotten, like some dream of the night, the moment after it had flashed across his brain. But John Gower was not a man to let go a valuable thought.

"What a day that was!" her lover went on. "I was standing in the engine-room looking at the wheels when the thought came to me. All at once I saw it: all at once, too, I saw how great an idea it was, how rich it would make me, how powerful. I could hardly get through the day, and while I was doing my own work I was thinking over the engine of the future. And that night I drew the first plans and began the first model. I called it, in my own mind, because I spoke to no one about it, not even my own father, the 'Rose Escomb,' that model of mine, which I made and remade, pulled to pieces and put together again, so often. It was lucky then that I had lived so solitary a life, because no one ever came to see me in my lodgings, and I had no interruption to fear. But I locked it up in the daytime for fear

some wind of my invention might get about. Oh! I was cautious. And when it was quite finished and perfect, when I could think of nothing that would improve it, when I was satisfied that my machine was as complete as my hands could make it, I sent the specifications to London and registered it. And then I came up myself, and felt that the day was come at last when I could come to Sir Jacob—even Sir Jacob—and ask him for his niece. Even then," he went on, not noticing how pale was Rose's cheek, "even then I did not like to leave things to chance. So when I showed Sir Jacob the specifications, I asked, as the condition that he should reap the benefit of the invention, a half share in the works—and the hand of his niece. Ha! ha! The hand of his niece. You never saw a man so startled. I thought how you would have laughed had you seen his face. That a man in his own employment, the son of his secretary, should show such presumption was at first too much for him. And he had to take a good look at the invention and make no end of calculations as to its worth before he could make up his mind to say yes."

"That was last night, I suppose?" said Rose.

"Yes, last night after dinner. I could not say anything to you then, because you were playing, and there was that popinjay of a fellow, Mr. Carteret, hanging about as if you belonged to him. Now, that's the sort of fellow I hate, Rose. Hands like a lady's, face always on the grin, never able to say a thing straight out, but must always play round it like a cat with a mouse. Yah! And besides, last night, Rose, the first time after seven years, I could not get over the feeling of strangeness. You looked so beautiful—too beautiful for me—and I was not able to realise my happiness. But now, Rose, now, it is all over, and you are mine at last."

He took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips and cheeks. Oh! how different were the kisses of Julian Carteret the day before! She accepted his caresses without resistance, quite passively; if the tears came into her eyes they were tears of humiliation and blind rage against Fate:

if she was silent it was because she had no words to speak of her shame in playing this false part: if she accepted her lover's kisses, it was because these were clearly part of the contract. If she engaged herself to him she must accept his caresses. Not to be allowed to kiss your *fiancée* would be a thing unseemly and quite foreign to the North-countryman's notions of an engagement.

"I cannot love you as you love me, John," she murmured at length, with dry lips.

He thought she meant that she could not love him with such a passionate longing as filled his own heart.

"No, Rose; because nobody *could* love any one else as I love you. Oh! how have I longed for this moment during the long seven years of our separation!"

"Do you really love me so much?" she said timidly. "Do you love me enough to do anything for me, like a knight of old?"

"The knights of old were humbugs," said John, laughing. "I would do any mortal thing for you but one——"

"And that one thing?" she asked eagerly.

"Is to give you up."

Her face fell. That was the one thing she would have asked him to do.

"And you would be satisfied to take me as I am," she went on, "knowing that I can never—never love you as you love me?"

"Quite satisfied, Rose—more than satisfied. So long as I have you, I have everything. If you are not to be mine, I have nothing. Why, my dear, the right sort of love will come. I am not afraid. When you and I are alone—not in a great dreary palace like this, with dinners which last for hours, and black coats for evenings, and stuck-up ceremonies to go through—but in a pretty cottage all our own——"

A cottage! and no black coats for evenings! and no ceremonies at all! Poor Rose!

"A cottage all our own, with a garden in front and one behind—then you will know what happiness really means.

We shall have dinner at one sharp to the minute—a quarter of an hour for a pipe—off to work again—back at six-thirty, punctual—have a wash——"

O heavens! he would have a wash!

"But you will not be a workman, John."

"Yes, I shall. I shall be the working partner. And I mean to work, too, among the wheels with the men just as I do now. Well, I shall get home at six-thirty, wash-up for the evening, have tea, and then sit down for a couple of hours' work over books or whatever else turns up. And then, my dear, at nine o'clock we shall sit side by side before the fire, while I smoke a pipe and drink a glass of grog and talk to my wife. What a life it will be!"

"What a life it will be!" echoed Rose drearily. To sit every evening by the fire while her husband smoked his tobacco. What a life!

"No fooling about with parties and society and all that nonsense," her lover went on; "no racing after pleasure. A quiet home life for you, and for me, a good hard-working twelve months in every year."

No parties! no fooling about! no society! What a life! The girl's heart sank very low.

"But come now," said John; "let us find out Sir Jacob."

He caught her hand and led her, his own face lit up by the most jovial of smiles, a contrast indeed to her shrinking, downcast air, out of the library and into the morning-room.

Here were Sir Jacob, Mrs. Sampson, and Reuben Gower. As the door opened and John advanced with all the pride of a bridegroom, Julian joined the party from the conservatory.

"Congratulate us, Sir Jacob; congratulate us, ma'am; congratulate us, dad. Rose has accepted me. Sir Jacob, we will sign that deed to-morrow."

"Ay—ay—ay?" asked Sir Jacob, with an air of great surprise. "My little girl has positively consented to marry my future partner, has she? Really now—really now. What are we to say, Reuben, to these young people!"

Reuben had sharper eyes than his son.

"If Miss Rose loves my boy," he replied, "then let them marry in God's name. If not——"

"Nonsense, father," interrupted John; "of course she loves me. She has loved me for the last seven years—haven't you, Rose ?—ever since she left us to come to this great house."

Reuben still looked at the girl, who made no sign, and whose eyes were downward cast.

Julian Carteret, at the door of the conservatory, listened speechless. Was he dreaming? Was he awake? Did the girl only yesterday really tell him that she loved him.

"Rose!" he cried.

At his voice she raised her head.

"O Julian!

Three of the four—her lover was not among them—who heard her cry his name, felt that it was the name of the man she loved, so pitiful, so helpless, so full of agony was the accent.

"O Julian!"

"What does it mean—this?" Julian asked.

She recovered herself, and took John's hand.

"I have promised to be the wife of John Gower. That is what it means, Julian. Uncle, are you content?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW LOVE.

"'Tis well to be off with the old love,
Before you are on with the new."

IT was all over then. Rose was engaged to her old playmate, and Julian was gone. That was what she said to herself, sitting beside her lover, who talked perpetually, and always of the life they were going to lead. It was a simple and honest life that poor John Gower pictured to himself, the best form of that kind of life which he knew.

There was, as we have seen, to be plenty of work in it—work every day and all day, with, for recreation, an hour of quiet talk over a pipe in the evening. It never occurred to him that to Rose such a life, even in a cottage "with a garden in front and behind," would be intolerable. Other women, those whom he knew, did not find it intolerable. That is, as they never grumbled, of course they liked it. That was to be presumed. The real fact, that the life of a woman in the class to which John Gower belonged is dull, monotonous, and circumscribed to a barbarous degree, was not one of those things which he had learned among his wheels. It is only in the lap of leisure that man finds time to think of the tastes and inclinations of women. The men of action like their womankind to govern themselves by law, tradition, and the Median rules of custom, which cannot be broken.

All the afternoon, all the evening, she endured his talk. He did not want her to talk to him. He was so absorbed in his own pursuits, that he had simply no room in his brain for anything else. Even his love for Rose was a part—so to speak—of his own private work, because he had retained her image in his brain through the years of his apprenticeship, and because in some vague way he had always looked forward to this engagement as one of his ends in life. The other ends were reputation and success. He wanted to be a great mechanician: he wanted to become another Stephenson or an Armstrong.

He was not a selfish man, but he was too intense and eager to be sympathetic. He pressed on his own way, his eyes fixed straight on the goal before him. He had never dreamed of such a possibility as that Rose should cease to care for him in the way that he cared for her. And now that they were actually affianced, the question was less likely to be raised in his own mind than ever.

She was pale and spiritless, not like the girl of seven years ago, so full of life and fun: she was silent: she was undemonstrative. All that he ascribed to the London air, which he, unmindful of his own smoky town, set down as thick and unwholesome. A few weeks up in the north, in that

cottage with a garden before and another behind, in the full enjoyment of the life he sketched out for her, the early breakfast, the one o'clock "stoking" which he called dinner (after a wash), the six o'clock tea, when he came home and "washed up for the evening," the two hours of quiet while he worked, and then the nine o'clock pipe, glass of grog, and talk. How that delicious, fresh, and eventful life would set her up. John grew romantic as he pictured his own domestic bliss.

He was not to blame: he did not know the companionship which had taken Rose out of her former life and made her look on things from the Life-of-Leisure point of view. One cannot represent to oneself too strongly the immense difference between the way in which people of wealth and leisure look on things and people who *must* work for their daily bread. Think what a difference there is between the lion of the forest and the sleepy good-natured creature in the Zoological Gardens. Suppose, again, that the swallows, instead of always going after the flies, had the flies brought to them. Life to Rose meant society, ways of pleasantness, softness, and art: to John it meant a struggle in which the strongest and the most persevering get the best things.

"My wife," he said to Rose, "will be never idle." He did not mean it as an admonition, but simply as a part of his dream for the future. Now Rose was always idle, and liked idleness, or at least such work as she could choose herself. "She will be sewing on my buttons and looking after my things and her own all the morning." Rose hated sewing. "She will look after the dinner herself"—was she going to be cook as well as wife? she wondered—"she will go for a walk or call upon her friends in the afternoon." Rose knew by recollection who and of what sort were the friends. "She will sew again or read all the evening. The time will never be dull, Rose, never wasted, never stupid."

He was so impetuous, this man of strong will, that his ardour fairly carried her away. She felt that, with him, she had no will, no power of self-assertion. She would be bound

to obey him, whatever he ordered; and she felt without being told, that if he was ever offended, his wrath would be a terrible thing to face. She was afraid of him.

Rose was not one of those self-reliant heroines who can bring against a strong nature one as strong and as unbending. Like most girls she loved things to go smoothly, and would sacrifice a great deal to ensure peace. One result of the leisurely life is, that the combative element in our nature gets rubbed away. We no longer love fighting, even for a good cause, while fighting for its own sake is a monstrous thing. There is a tendency to shirk unpleasantness, which is not always healthy for the moral system.

But this future which lay before her. She was simply dismayed at the prospect. There was not one redeeming feature, not a single ray of light or hope. A husband whom she did not love and who terrified and repelled her by his intensity and strength: the deprivation of all the things which made up her happiness: the loss of her lover and the shame of feeling what he must think of her: a dreary stretch of years before her, in which there should be no relief, no change—no hope of any relief or change.

Perhaps, she thought, while her hand lay in John's, and he went on talking, talking, talking about his work, his machinery, and his plans—perhaps she might die. Everybody in trouble hopes that. Death, so dreadful at other times, appears in such friendly guise in moments—thank God! life has but few of them—of agony, remorse, or shame. Surely she might die. After a year or two of misery, she might go into a consumption—many girls in books go into consumption—and die. Perhaps from her deathbed she might send to Julian one last word asking for pardon.

She was only nineteen. She was in desperate trouble of soul. This imaginative nonsense may be pardoned her. Only a very young person would have made up such a drama in her own mind. When we get older, and think how best we might obtain relief, we generally begin with the death not of ourselves at all, but of the sinner who has caused us annoyance. That fellow dead, we think, how smoothly we

should go! He deserves to die, confound him! How if he were to get run over in the street, or smashed in a railway accident, or drowned in a boat, or carried off by typhus fever, or murdered by one of the other people whom he has afflicted? No doubt in old times one would be naturally impelled, after letting their imagination roam among these pleasant suppositions, to take a dinner-knife, and creep noiselessly through the forest to a place where one might meet him. One prod: so! no more trouble from him. And now, having enacted the part of Providence the Avenger, in removing a villain from the world, let us hope that no one will have observed the deed, and so go home with a grateful heart.

Presently John Gower left her, and she was able to go to her own room and rest. The sound of his voice, hard, ringing, and metallic, beat upon her brain like a hammer. And as she laid her aching head upon a pillow, there came upon her ears, as if by contrast, the soft voice and gentle tones of the lover whom she had sent away.

There was silence in the house: it was always a quiet place except when Julian Carteret was in it, but to-day it seemed more silent than usual. Luncheon was served, but Mrs. Sampson was the only person present at the meal, and she was excited and restless, perhaps suffering from the depression of spirits natural to one who has just lost, so to speak, a third husband.

Luncheon over, Mrs. Sampson retreated to her own apartments, and then the house was perfectly silent.

About half-past three a note was brought to her.

"Lost Lavinia," it began, "grant one more interview, a farewell interview, to your unfortunate Bodkin."

He was waiting outside the house, the footman said, with a smile partly of contempt and partly of enjoyment, because everybody knew how Mr. Bodkin had let out at Sir Jacob. He would not come in without express permission of Mrs. Sampson.

"Show Mr. Bodkin to the morning-room," she said, with dignity; "let him await me there."

She kept him waiting for about a quarter of an hour, remorselessly. When she came down, she was got up for the occasion in black silks and with a white pocket-handkerchief, a little tear-stained, in her hand.

"Lavinia!"

"Henry!" She applied the handkerchief to the eyes.

A noticeable thing about Bodkin was the fact that he had already given up his semi-clerical dress, and had elapsed to the tweeds of his ordinary wear. These were tight, and, perhaps, a little horsey.

"Lavinia, it is all over. The news of yesterday is quite true. Lord Addlehede is locked up for the rest of his natural life, and the Society for the General Advancement of Humanity is no more. I have this morning sold the furniture, which, with the first quarter's salary, will be the sole consolation and remuneration of the secretary. It fetched £85, 6s. 8d. And now, Lavinia, until better times shall dawn, we must part again. For the third time the cup has slipped. I knew what was going to happen when that glass of sherry slipped from my hands. I knew that something dreadful was hanging over our heads."

"Yes, Henry, we must part. What do you propose doing?"

"For the moment, Lavinia—let me rather say Mrs. Sampson—I am going to woo the smiles of faithless fortune as a —a sporting prophet."

"Henry!"

"It is true, Lavinia. I am not yet certain whether it is more humiliation, or whether it is promotion. Literary work is the only kind of work I have never yet attempted: perhaps I shall succeed in it. Who knows? The name of Henry Bodkin—I have dropped the Theophilus for the time —may yet ring like a trumpet-echo in the ears of the English people. Prophet to the *Breakfast Bell!*"

"But what do you know about horses, Henry?"

"Nothing, Lavinia; but I have occasionally backed a horse when I was sweet upon it, and I always lost. Also, I used to be very fond, when I could afford it, of going down

to Epsom with a hamper. More is not wanted of a sporting prophet."

"And will it pay?"

"That, Lavinia, I cannot yet tell you. Suppose I come back in a few weeks, what would be the lowest figure, angelic one?"

"You must satisfy me that you can make four hundred a year at least. That, with my trifling income, would be sufficient to maintain us both in tolerable comfort. But, Henry, I cannot promise," here she blushed violently. "It may be — it has happened so twice already — that another——"

"Ha!" he cried. "Another? that would be Fate's final blow. Have you any idea, Lavinia, who the other may be?"

"In fact, Henry," said Mrs. Sampson, "only last night, Sir Jacob, talking over——"

"Sir Jacob!"

"Talking over his niece's approaching marriage and his own loneliness, was good enough to express a hope that I would remain in the house as its mistress—Lady Escomb."

"Sir Jacob! The viper!"

Mrs. Sampson sprang to her feet.

"Viper, Mr. Bodkin? Is it thus that you dare to speak of my future husband?"

"I was your future husband the other day," he sighed. "It is all over now. Good-bye, *Lady Escomb.*"

"Good-bye, Henry," she said softly; "you can wait, can you not?"

"Hang it, madam," cried Bodkin, "are you beginning already to wish him gone after the other two?"

"You are brutal, Henry. Leave me, sir."

"Not but what you will grace the position, I am sure."

"Do you think so? Ah! Henry, if you were only a baronet! A title, a great house, a great income, a husband who is so rich and so good, Henry."

"Humph! yes—and so good, if you like. Well, I must stay here no longer. Farewell, Lavinia; and if you can—

why, there, I suppose it must be for ever. I would back Sir Jacob, for holding on, against myself."

The sporting prophet disappeared, leaving Mrs. Sampson alone. She looked about her, and presently began to walk up and down the room, opening drawers in cabinets, pulling books from the library, arranging flowers as if she was already the mistress of the place. Lady Escomb! what a sweet name! what an engine for filling other people's hearts with rage, envy, malice, and spite. Lady Escomb!

"Good gracious! Mr. Carteret, how you frightened me!"

Julian came in, hoping to find Rose alone, through the conservatory.

"Sorry to frighten you, Mrs. Sampson. I met Bodkin at the gate. He looked very woebegone."

"Poor Henry!"

"Are his last chances gone?"

Mrs. Sampson shook her head.

"It is impossible to say what he may do in the future," she said. "For the present, as you say, his chances are gone. But you ought not to be here, Mr. Carteret. You know that Rose is engaged to Mr. Gower. You must not disturb her mind."

"Look here, Mrs. Sampson," said Julian, taking her hands—she was a soft, fat, comfortable figure of a woman, who really had a tender heart. "You and I have always been good friends, have we not?"

"Very good friends, I am sure."

"And you have known all along how much I loved Rose."

"Yes—all along—and very sorry I am for both of you, too."

"Well, I want to see Rose."

She shook her head.

"Anything but that, Mr. Carteret."

"I want to ask her a question, that is all."

"But that would be the very thing you must not do."

"Come, Mrs. Sampson, if you will help me, I will bribe you."

"It isn't right, Mr. Cartaret. I am as much surprised at the thing as you can be; and the poor girl is miserable. But Sir Jacob has set his heart upon it, and they are engaged, and it would only make worse trouble."

"I am going to make more trouble," said Julian doggedly. "I am going to make all the trouble I can. I want to see Rose first, and hear from her own lips what it means, and then I shall get hold of this young Lancashire lad and tell him what I can. And, lastly, I shall try Sir Jacob himself. Between the two of them I shall manage to make things disagreeable."

Julian spoke with great bitterness, being, in point of fact, beside himself with indignation and astonishment.

"But you do not want me to help in making things disagreeable."

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Sampson. Consider the position of things. Rose does not love this man; you know that, of course."

"Of course, any one not a blind bat, as the man is, could see it with half an eye," said Mrs. Sampson the experienced.

"And she does, or she did, love me," said Julian. "Will you not help me to have an explanation with her? I want to ask her why she did it. That is simple enough, is it not?"

"She ought not to think of you any longer, Mr. Carteret." Mrs. Sampson was visibly softening. "I have had myself the same ordeal to go through. I was engaged to—to Henry Bodkin, many years ago. We had pledged our vows and sworn fidelity; but he had no money, and I was compelled to throw him over for the late Mr. Chiltern. It may have been criminal, Mr. Carteret, but I confess that when I stood before the altar with that good old man, I wished it had been Henry Bodkin instead."

"And you were happy with Mr. Chiltern, although you loved another man?"

"Happiness, Mr. Carteret, is a good deal mixed up with creature comforts. I liked even then, when I was much younger than I am now, to be quite sure that the house

would go on and the butcher's bill get paid. I should never have had that assurance with Henry Bodkin. You see, that consideration has great weight even with the giddiest girl. Dinner first, dress next——"

"And love last, I suppose."

"Love runs through all," said Mrs. Sampson sentimentally. "Love rules the roast as well as the court and camp. But oh! how much more fondly you love a man when you know that the butcher's and the dressmaker's bills are safe!"

"Well, but that is my case," urged Julian. "I am rich —that is, I am pretty well off. Sir Jacob has got seventy thousand pounds of mine locked up in a box somewhere, and there is another trifle in the Funds which brings in a few hundreds. My wife, at any rate, will have her dinner assured for the rest of her natural life. I never thought about it before, but now you come to mention it, there must be a good deal of anxiety going about the world in reference to next year's dinners. I wonder people marry at all unless they are rich."

Mrs. Sampson shook her head.

"Mr. Chiltern died a few years after our marriage," she said, "and left me with an annuity—a small one, it is true —as a reward for soothing his declining years. That was my only reward. Had I married Henry Bodkin what would have been the cares and vicissitudes of my life? And had Henry Bodkin only been in a position, after the first year of my widowhood, to keep up the expense of a small but tasteful home, I should not have married Mr. Sampson. A very different man from Mr. Chiltern, and perhaps the contrast, for a time, pleased: but——"

"Let us come back to Rose," said Julian abruptly; "I have no business here after yesterday's scene. I feel as if I was in an enemy's camp. Be merciful and send Rose to me."

She who wavers is lost. Mrs. Sampson wavered. Mrs. Sampson was lost.

"If I send Rose down to you," she said, "you will not let Sir Jacob know that I did it?"

"I will never let Sir Jacob know one word about it. Only let me see her."

For it occurred suddenly to the good lady that if Sir Jacob found her out interfering in his projects, there was small chance of her ever becoming Lady Escomb.

She left Julian and hurried away.

Rose was lying down, half asleep.

"Rose, dear," Mrs. Sampson whispered; "poor child! how hot your head is! Get up and brush your hair. You must go down to the morning-room."

She obeyed.

"Will he not leave me alone for a single hour?" she said wearily, thinking of John Gower. "Oh, me! it will be better when we are married, because then I shall only see him in the evening. Will that do, dear Mrs. Sampson?"

"Stay one moment. You have got no colour at all in your cheeks, my dear, not a bit of colour. Put on this ribbon at least."

She adorned the girl, womanlike, with a ribbon, and saw her creep slowly down the stairs; and then with a sigh of sympathy, she betook herself to the drawing-room, and tried to renew the sweet dream of ladyhood from which Julian Carteret had interrupted her.

"Rose!"

"Julian! O Julian!"

"My dear love—my own girl." She was in his arms again, and felt—at home. "Let me kiss you, just to make me feel that this is all real, and that, whatever happens, you love me still."

But she pushed him from her.

"Let me go, Julian. You must not—you must not. Did you not hear yesterday what I said? I am engaged—do you understand?—engaged to be married to John Gower."

"So I heard. What I want to know is, what it means."

"It means, really and truly, exactly what the words mean. Julian, it is the sad, sad truth."

"But you *must* explain it all to me. What does it mean? what does it mean? Have women a dozen hearts, that they

can give away one on Saturday and one on Sunday, and never feel the loss? Do you think, Rose, that you can accept a man on one day and throw him over the next without even an explanation?"

"O Julian! can you not take the fact, and—and not be cruel to me?"

"Good heavens! Rose"—she threw herself into a chair and buried her face in her hands—"good heavens! Cruel to you! But I want to know——"

"Julian, I have no word of explanation—none—none." She burst into a low moaning.

"You have done this thing, Rose, and you will not tell me why. By Heaven, it seems impossible. I had heard of such things, but I said to myself, 'Rose is true, Rose is constant.' What fools men are! We ask but one virtue in women—fidelity. We think we can supply all the rest. They may be frivolous, they may be foolish, they may be vain, they may be petulant, they may be full of whims and fancies: but if they are true, we forgive them all the rest."

Rose lifted her head.

"You never can forgive me, then, because I am not true. I can bear it better, Julian, when you speak like that—better than when you talk of loving me still. But let me go. I am frivolous and foolish, and all the bitterest things that you can think or say; but one thing I was not. I was not untrue when I told you that I—I——"

"When you told me, dear Rose"—he bent over her and caressed her shapely head—"when you told me that you loved me."

"It was true, Julian," she murmured.

"Why—why—then, Rose, if it was true then, it is true now; for I have done nothing to make your love grow less. If it was true, then, that I loved you, it is ten times as true, a thousand times as true, that I love you now—now that I seem to have lost you."

"It is not right, Julian—indeed, indeed it is not right. What you want is impossible. Oh! if I could tell you all!"

"Right—not right? If I love you, if you love me, what

place is there more fitted for you than my arms? What have you to do with John Gower! By what right does he come between you and me?"

"By a right stronger than your love, even."

"Tell me, Rose"—Julian's voice was as resolute as John Gower's, and Rose quailed before it—"tell me, or I will go to John Gower and make him tell me what is that right." Had either of them looked round they would have seen a figure in the conservatory—none other than Reuben Gower himself. He stood irresolute for a moment, and then, with strange, pained face, hid himself behind the plants and listened—a mean thing to do at all times. But he did it.

"John Gower," Julian went on—"he has an honest face and will listen to reason. I will go to him and ask him by what right he is going to condemn a girl to a life of misery with a man whom she does not love—and can never love. I will move his heart, if he has one, by such a picture of his own selfishness in exacting this sacrifice, and your wretchedness when the day will bring no change and the night will only throw a darker shadow over your heart, that out of very human pity, he will fain give you back to my arms. Remember, I shall say everything that a bitterly wronged man can say for himself, as well as for the girl he sees sacrificed."

Rose remembered all that was at stake. She sprang to her feet in alarm.

"You must not, Julian; you must not. You cannot guess the mischief, the terrible mischief, that will follow."

"I care for no mischief," said Julian, "I am fighting for my own hand. Do you think I am going to part from you without a struggle?"

"Then," said Rose, "I must tell you all. I marry John Gower to save my uncle from ruin, perhaps from—from—I can hardly say the word—from disgrace."

"Your uncle—Sir Jacob—the millionaire!"

"He is no millionaire at all. He has no money and no means of meeting his securities. All the people he employs

will be turned out into the streets, beggars; and—oh! Julian—all your money will be lost too."

"Oh!" said Julian. "But how does this connect with John Gower?"

"Because he has made a great invention, on the security of which Sir Jacob can raise more money and carry on his works. I am to be the price of Sir Jacob's sharing in the invention. John Gower thinks that, because we played together as boy and girl, I love him still. He has always remembered me, and always loved me. Look at those pictures, Julian. They are the plans of his invention. With these in his hand, Sir Jacob can retrieve his fortunes; without them, he is a bankrupt."

"I see. This is a very pretty hobble. Poor Rose! And you were to pull us out of it, were you! My money gone, too. Serious for me."

"Yes, Julian. Your money is all gone, and you can, if you like, my uncle says, prosecute him for not taking proper care of your fortune."

"Yes," Julian replied meditatively. "That is the way in which he puts it, does he? Blackstone and other authorities call that kind of behaviour by a different name."

"It is to save him, to save you, to save all those poor people, that I must marry John Gower."

"So this is all, is it, Rose? Then you never, never, never shall marry John Gower, that is flat, and I shall tell him the reason why. Sir Jacob a pauper too!" At that moment, Sir Jacob, returned from the City, stood in the doorway, large and ponderous. Neither saw him. "Gad!" Julian went on, "we shall both look pretty interesting when the sad news falls on a sympathising world. The Jews have got a small trifle of bills of mine; there will be wailing among the tribes when they hear about it. Is that all, Rose—only your uncle ruined? Let him begin again. He knows as many dodges as any. Old Fox, he is sure to get on his legs. As for the poor people, if they are not employed by him, they will be employed by those who carry on the works for the bankrupt. My poor, dear, darling girl!

What a fuss about nothing! Why, there's Bodkin ruined, too. That makes three. Bodkin, poor beggar, who has lost his Lavinia with his secretaryship. I, who have lost my fortune and gained a bride. We shall have to live as the sparrows live, my angel, and pick up crumbs. Never fear, we will manage somehow. And there is Sir Jacob: he has lost more than either of us, because such a good man cannot afford to lose his name. However, now I have got you back, I am not going to let you go again for fifty Sir Jacobs. He can now, Rose, enjoy the luxury of doing Good without drawing a cheque. No doubt he will begin a career of active personal benevolence among the poor. Ho! ho! And now I shall go and find out Mr. John Gower."

As he turned, he faced Sir Jacob, who advanced with grave deliberation and a very stately deportment.

"No, Julian Carteret," he said, opposing both hands. "No, you have done enough mischief already. It is nothing, as you say, that Sir Jacob Escomb is perhaps on the brink of ruin. Do what you please: institute a prosecution against me for your lost money, which is, I suppose, gone with the rest. But with these arrangements, with the solemn contract which I have made with the son of my old friend, I will brook no interference. This marriage is no hastily concocted scheme to save me from poverty—the good man is not afraid of poverty—it is the purpose of a life. Reuben Gower is my oldest and dearest friend. We have together, he and I, frequently talked over this match; it is a settled thing for nearly twenty years. I will not consent, Julian, whatever reluctant admissions you have forced from this foolish girl, I will never consent to have her happiness —yes, I repeat it, her solid and permanent happiness— destroyed by your wanton and selfish folly. I thought better of you, Julian Carteret. At one time I thought you might settle down into a sober and earnest man. It grieves me to think that you are the last man in the world to whom I would entrust my niece's hand as your trustee——"

"Don't you think," said Julian, "don't you think that,

after the mess you have made of it, the less you say about that trust the better?"

"We will not discuss that now. Leave us, and make no further interference in my plans. Go, sir. There is nothing more to be said."

It was Reuben Gower who stepped from the conservatory and stood between Sir Jacob, whose attitude, morally speaking, was grand, and Julian Carteret, who was hesitating what next to say.

"There *is* something more to be said," he began quietly. "There is a great deal more to be said. Rose, I have overheard all. Julian Carteret, it is true what Rose told you, that Sir Jacob is a ruined man. Look at him, sleek and bold of front as he stands, he is hopelessly ruined. No one can save him from shipwreck, except my son, and he shall not. For he has grown so used to deceiving all the world, that he has even deceived me. He has deceived me. It is not true that the engagement was the scheme of twenty years."

"You wrong me, Reuben," said Sir Jacob with dignity. "Everybody wrongs me. But never mind. It was *my* scheme for twenty years. That is all."

Reuben took no notice of this interruption.

"The engagement was never thought of by Sir Jacob, or by me, until the night before last, when my boy, who has cherished ambitious schemes, made, as a condition of partnership, marriage with Rose Escomb. You may forgive him, Miss Rose, because he did not know how you have been changed from what you were. You do not understand me, Mr. Carteret. We Lancashire folk, living at home, in our old way, thinking the same thoughts every day, forget that people away up here in London may change. We did not know that you loved him no longer; that you were a London young lady instead of a sonsie Lancashire lass."

Here John himself, in his quick, rough way, appeared, with a bundle of papers in his hands.

"Here you are, Sir Jacob. Here's the deed of partnership. Let us sign, and have done with it."

Sir Jacob seized the pen. That, at least, might be signed before the inevitable explosion. But it was too late.

"John," said Reuben, "there will be no partnership."

"No partnership? Why not?"

"And no marriage."

"What do you mean, father?"

Reuben laid his arm on his son's wrist.

"We have been deceived, you and I, John; we have been deceived. I knew, but I did not tell you, that Sir Jacob was on the very eve of being a bankrupt, when your invention interposed to save him. And it would have saved him, and it shall make you a rich man yet. But without Rose Escomb, my boy. Give her up."

"Give up Rose? and to whom? To that—popinjay?" He pointed to Julian.

"Thank you, my friend," said Julian. "Go on, Mr. Gower."

"What did Sir Jacob tell you about Rose? Was it this? You told him that you had never forgotten your sweet-faced playfellow, and that you loved her, after all these seven years, as much as when you were children together. He said that Rose had never ceased to speak of you, did he not?"

"Ay!"

"Have you ever spoken of him to your uncle, Rose?" asked Reuben.

Rose hung her head. The action was sufficient answer.

"After he had opened the matter to her, John, what did he tell you?"

"He said that Rose loved me still, and that I should find a cordial response to my affection."

"Yes," said Reuben bitterly; "that is what he said. He fooled you, boy. He fooled us both. Rose Escomb is not for you. She does not love you. She is wretched at the thought of marrying you; and she loves another man—this man, Mr. Julian Carteret. Give her up, boy."

"Is this true, Rose?" asked John Gower, whose face was white.

"Yes, John; it is true."

John Gower took the drawings of his invention from the table, rolled them up, and put them into his pocket. Then he seized the deed of partnership, and tore it in halves, throwing the pieces on the carpet before Sir Jacob. And then, without a word of reproach, he took his father by the hand and led him from the room.

Sir Jacob looked after them with sorrow rather than anger.

"They will be very sorry," he said. "Some day they will be bitterly sorry. So will you, Julian. So will you, Rose. The blow you have drawn down will fall most heavily upon yourselves."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

SO GREAT AS WELL AS GOOD.

IT is a month later. The bankruptcy of the great Sir Jacob Escomb has long been published to the world, and commented on by the newspapers, and at every dinner-table in the country. There was a general feeling of sympathy for the fall of a man so prominent in all good works; and one enthusiast even went so far as to propose in the columns of a daily paper that a grand national movement should be set on foot, with a view to restoring Sir Jacob Escomb to his former greatness. This fell through, for want of backers; but everybody applauded the idea, and for a single day half the world were eager to see the other half produce their money. However, as none was subscribed, the plan dropped.

It had been a sad month for poor Rose Escomb. Julian Carteret was busy looking after his affairs, which were in a glorious state of confusion; and as Sir Jacob would not allow him to call at the house, Rose had to meet him by appointment, chiefly in Kensington Gardens. Julian, at all events, was not broken in spirit by disaster. Not at all. He kept up his spirits, and promised brave things in a vague way.

It was a bad bankruptcy; and although Sir Jacob's friends went about railing at the Eldorado Government, it became known that his affairs had been for years in a rotten condition, and, which was more, that he himself had known it. An honest man, his enemies said, would have made the best compromise possible years before, and then gone on again.

Very little for the creditors out of such an enormous smash; but still, something. Julian found that, after all, he would find himself in possession of a few thousands for his immediate wants. After all, it is better to find a plank in a shipwreck, than to be swimming without one. There is a certain sense of safety connected with a plank, however small. And what next? Well, Julian was not a fool; he could look round him, and form plans at leisure.

It is a week before the day advertised for the Great Sale of Sir Jacob Escomb's Books, Pictures, Furniture, and Plate, two days before those on which the collections can be viewed, the last day that Rose has to spend in the place where she has known so many happy hours. During the last few weeks she has had little communication with her uncle. He has dined in town every day, and taken his breakfast in his own room; so that she has hardly ever seen him. This is the Baronet's way of showing his resentment. He does not reproach; he has no words of sarcasm; he keeps himself apart.

With the first breath of misfortune, Mrs. Sampson vanished, not without an affecting farewell scene, in which her elderly suitor expressed, in the most tender tones, his regret at the misfortunes which made the union, once so fondly thought of, an impossibility. To be Lady Escomb, Mrs. Sampson thought, without a carriage and servants, perhaps with a semi-detached villa at Hornsey, and a maid-of-all-work; most probably, with a husband perpetually lamenting past splendours, was altogether too gloomy a prospect. What she did not know, what nobody knew, was the very comfortable settlement, by which, on Rose's marriage, unless that were with Sir Jacob's consent, the

Baronet would step into thirty thousand pounds. Now, with thirty thousand pounds, or fifteen hundred a year, a great deal may be done by an economical person. So Mrs. Sampson vanished, She had her faults; but it was with a sad heart that Rose saw her departure, and found herself left quite alone.

She did not see either Reuben or John Gower. They had both gone down into Lancashire: the former was employed by the trustees in the administration of the works, and the latter was still in uncertainty what to do about his invention. "Perhaps they had forgiven her," Rose thought. Angry or forgiving, they made no sign.

No one came to see her at all. The callers and visitors ceased as if with one consent on the day of the public announcement. No more carriages rolled up the smooth drive, no more invitations and cards came by footmen and by post: at one stroke Sir Jacob and his niece dropped out of society. And yet there was a universal murmur of sympathy. You have noticed how in a flock of sheep if one fall ill and lie down in suffering, the rest all go away and leave him to himself to die or get better as he thinks fit. That is what we do in this highly-civilised country. One of us drops down—it is not his fault, perhaps—he has been smitten by the "Visitation of God," through the crimes or laches of others, by wind and weather; as soon as he is down we all go away in a body and forget him. He no longer belongs to us. The Society of the Well-to-do has no room for those who have fallen out of their own lines. They pass by and forget them. The place of one parvenu is easily filled by another, the reputation of one *nouveau riche* is very soon forgotten when it is replaced by that of another. Sir Jacob out of the way, Sir Esau supplanted him. No doubt he had excellent qualities of his own, though not resembling those of Sir Jacob. And the very contrast was charming.

It was the last morning. Rose went round the rooms taking a melancholy farewell of all. Everything in the house spoke to her of past happiness. There was no ornament, no picture, no piece of furniture but had its association

—and all with Julian Carteret, the man whom she had ruined, as her uncle was good enough to remind her.

Sir Jacob, while she was lingering about the piano, entered the morning-room. Still preserving his dignity, he assumed a melancholy air which became the resignation of a good man. Sitting down, he lay back in the chair as one who suffers more than the outward world knows, and sighed heavily, allowing his left hand to hang below the chair-arm. It was an attitude of profound resignation.

"Uncle," cried Rose hotly, "do not reproach me."

"I reproach no one, child," he said, as if he might have reproached all the world but refrained. "You have heard no word of reproach from my lips, not even against Reuben Gower or Julian Carteret."

He did not say, what Rose felt, that to go round in silence, looking sorrowful reproach, was worse than to give anger words.

"Reuben Gower," he went on, "the man whom I cherished for thirty years and supported in affluence"—he did not say that Reuben was the man who had done his work faithfully, laid the groundwork of his fortune, saved him thousands, and was repaid by the affluence of three hundred pounds a year.

"Julian Carteret, whom you are, I suppose, still resolved to marry, is punished by the loss of his fortune. Against him reproaches were needless." He spoke, and for the moment the girl almost felt as if Heaven had declared against Julian.

"Well. The sale will take place in a week, child, and we leave to-day. Will you please to call in the servants? I should like to say a word to them before we part."

The servants presently came in a body headed by Downing the butler. All Sir Jacob's servants were eminently respectable, and most of them were middle-aged. They shared the universal sympathy with their master, whose failure they attributed to the machinations of the Evil One. The housekeeper and the butler stood a little in advance of the rest, as belonged to their superior rank. Behind them were

the two footmen, the hall-porter, the cook and her assistant, half a dozen maids, the coachman and grooms, the gardener and his assistant, and a couple of pages; at the back of all, two stable-boys. It was an imposing assemblage.

Sir Jacob shaded his eyes for a minute or two as if arranging his thoughts. Then he slowly rose and spoke, leaning slightly forward, with the points of his fingers on the table. The same Sir Jacob as of old, with the gold eye-glasses, the heavy gold chain, the open frock-coat, and the breadth of shirt-front; but saddened by calamity, so that his voice was soft and his manner impressive. One or two of the maids burst into tears the moment he began, and the rest of the women got their pocket-handkerchiefs in readiness.

"My friends," he began, "my lowly but respected friends, you have of course heard that a great reverse of fortune, by which a proud man would be humbled, has happened to me. You have also read, perhaps, in the papers that it is my desire to act honourably by my creditors. I have resolved to part with everything in my possession"—he said this as if his creditors did not possess the power of making him part with everything whether he liked it or not. "In breaking up my establishment, however, I do not class you among my creditors, and by selling a few perfectly private family jewels I shall be enabled to pay you all which is due to you in full, and with a month's wages in lieu of notice." Here there were murmurs of satisfaction and more crying among the women. "I call you together to-day in order to bid you 'God-speed' on your departure, and that we may exchange those kindly words of friendship which remind us that we are all, from the man of title to the stable-boy—I say, to the stable-boy" (here all turned and looked at William and George)—"in a certain sense, brothers. Observe, particularly, my friends, that the effect of a life devoted to doing Good is above all calculated to enable you to bear up against misfortune. My example may be a lesson to many: my reward is no longer in the purse. That is empty. My reward is *here*" (he tapped his breast), "and warms a

heart which would otherwise be nipped by the cold frosts of poverty. There is left behind the consciousness of having done Good. I may still help the good cause by counsels and experience, though no longer with money. Our household, my friends, breaks up immediately; this day week will see us all separated, never more to meet together again" (sobs from the women-servants—all impressed except the two footmen, who would perhaps have cried too were it not for the powder in their hair which any wrinkling of the scalp caused by emotion would derange). "I wish you farewell, my friends, and implore you to remember my last words—do Good."

It was the butler who stepped forward as the spokesman of the servants.

"Sir Jacob," he said huskily, "we thank you for your kind words: we've been proud to read your noble speeches, many's the time, reported in the papers, and proud to serve such a good man. And we wish you new success, like the old times; and we're all of us very sorry, Sir Jacob."

It was a genuine and a heart-felt speech which the white-headed old man made. He had never had so good a place before, never been so entirely trusted, never been in any cellar—Sir Jacob bought the whole stock of the previous occupant, the Bishop of St. Shekels—where the port was so sound, and he has not yet got so good a place again. Perhaps he never may.

"Thank you, Downing; I thank you all," said Sir Jacob —and the servants trooped away.

A beautiful account of the scene appeared in one of the morning papers next day, in which Sir Jacob's speech was given in the Thucydidean style, with many things which he had not said. It came from a certain tavern much frequented by butlers. In that tavern a certain Irishman, who made an honest living by purveying for the Press in a humble way, heard this touching incident in Sir Jacob's life, and wrote it down with embellishments, so that there was more sympathy with the insolvent philanthropist.

"And now, Rose," said Sir Jacob, when the servants were

gone, "you will take care that everything, except your own dress and jewellery and such trifles, is left for the sale."

"Of course, uncle. May I not just have one or two little things from this table?" It was covered with the little pretty trifles which girls treasure.

"Certainly not, Rose. Leave every one of them. Nothing more reveals honesty of purpose than the abandonment of everything. Your aunt's jewels, of course, are not my own to give away, and the presentation plate, which was not bought, cannot be sold. Also there are a few portfolios of water-colours, which may be put up with our boxes. For the rest, let everything go—everything."

"But uncle, the paintings—the jewellery—ought not they, too, to go? Is it right?"

Sir Jacob at once assumed the air of superiority.

"You will allow me, Rose," he said, "to be the best judge of what is right in my own house. I am not, at my time of life, to be taught—I hope—common morality."

"O uncle! it seems so hard, so dreadfully hard, for you. Where shall we go? Into lodgings?"

"Lodgings!" cried Sir Jacob, with ineffable disgust; "lodgings!"

Rose had visions of ruin as complete as any she had read of in novels.

"Till I can find a situation as a governess and work for you."

"Find a situation and work for me!" Sir Jacob grew as red as a turkey-cock in the gills. "Find a sit—— Is the girl really gone stark staring mad?"

"If we are to bear poverty, dear uncle," Rose pleaded, "let us bear it with a cheerful heart. We can live on little, you and I, and I daresay I shall be able to use my little accomplishments. Perhaps we can sell the jewels."

"This girl," ejaculated Sir Jacob, "is gone clear out of her senses. Do you imagine, Rose, that I am in danger of starvation? Do you think that when a man like ME, like Sir JACOB ESCOMB, becomes insolvent for the moment, he fails like some bankrupt wretch of a small draper, who puts up

his shutters and goes off to the workhouse? Understand, Rose, that while failure is death to the small man, to the great man it is only a temporary check."

"O uncle! then there is some money left. How glad I am, because now Julian will get back part of what he has lost!"

"Julian," responded Sir Jacob coldly, "will get his dividend with the creditors. They talk of two shillings in the pound, but I have nothing, literally nothing to do with their arrangements. My lawyers will settle everything for me. Julian, who has behaved shamefully, may take his chance with the rest. Which reminds me, Rose, that I have to speak with you on another matter. You still propose to marry Julian Carteret?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Without my consent?"

Rose hardened herself.

"I owe you much, sir, more than I can ever think of repaying. But I do not owe you the happiness of the future. I obeyed you once——"

"And granted an interview to Julian immediately afterwards. Go on."

"I did not know he was waiting to see me. Had I been allowed to tell poor John Gower all, this would not have happened. Now I follow the dictates of my own heart and the guidance of Julian."

"Very good—very good. As you will. You know that the thirty thousand pounds which your aunt bequeathed to you——"

"Are they not lost with the rest?"

"Not at all. They are in the Funds. The condition attached to them was that you should marry with my consent. If you marry without my consent, the money becomes mine. I withhold my consent to your marriage with Julian Carteret."

He had fired his shot, played his trump card. There was nothing more to say. Stay—one thing more.

"I repeat, Rose, that these little knick-knacks, especially,

must be left for the creditors. Nothing looks so well in cases of this sort as total resignation even of the smallest trifles. This clock"—there was a valuable little clock on the mantel-shelf—"belonged, I think, to Lady Escomb. Everything of hers, of course, will be saved from the sale."

He carried the clock away with him. When the sale came off, the creditors were astonished at the very small value of the articles of virtu and art, for which the house had been so famous. China? There was hardly anything; and yet people had called Sir Jacob rich in china, spoken of Chelsea monkeys, all sorts of things. Oils? Well, yes, there were a great many oils; but, somehow, they were not worth much: mostly by rising artists, to buy whom was to speculate on the future and lock up your money. There were water-colours, too, portfolios full; but there was nothing of very great value. And as for the collections made for him in Italy, Constantinople, and Cairo, there was really nothing that was not as common as dirt. The sale, so far, was a failure. As for the books, they were handsomely bound, but there were no scarce books among them. People had been led to expect a library of rare and costly volumes. Really, only the books without which no gentleman's library is complete. Gibbon, Robertson, Hume, Macaulay, Carlyle, that kind of library. The furniture, it is true, realised one's fondest anticipations. There, at least, everything was handsome, costly, valuable, and in the best taste. And as the furniture, so the carriages and horses. Sir Jacob had been well served there. The wines were also quite beyond everything that was expected. As for wine, indeed, Sir Jacob was a sensible man. He knew that you can always get plenty of good wine by the simple process of going to a good wine merchant, of whom there is no lack. And he thought that he should not want wine any more, because he intended, for the present, at least, to live at the Club, whose cellars were as amply stocked as those of any merchant.

There are very few people, now, who are allowed the privi-

lege of visiting Sir Jacob at his quiet chambers in Pall Mall. Some of those who do go there remark on the excellent taste and the intrinsic value of the things which decorate his modest three rooms. There is china, for instance, worth anything; there are water-colours by the dozen; there are rare old books in quaint and curious bindings; and there are a few oils, which make the mouths of connoisseurs to water.

"All these things," Sir Jacob says, "were the property of my wife, Lady Escomb. She bequeathed them to her niece, the wife of my late ward, Julian Carteret, who gave them to me. It is, in fact, lending them to me, because she will have them back when my course is run. It is the same with the Presentation Plate. I confess I was not sorry when the dear child refused to let those things go with the rest, at the sale of my effects."

But when he first told Rose what he intended to do, it seemed to her to be wicked. Girls understand the world so little. As if Sir Jacob could possibly do a mean or wrong thing. The whole business, indeed, seemed to her weak understanding cruel and wicked, and yet she dared not whisper her thoughts, even to herself. They, who had ruined so many people, were going from a large house to a small house, and from great magnificence to great comfort. Ought not *all* the money to be given up, everything? And as for her own portion, the fortune left by Lady Escomb to herself, surely that should be surrendered?

"May I come in, Miss Escomb?"

It is Mr. Bodkin, clad in the tight tweeds, a pocket-book in his hand; of course, no one ever saw Henry Bodkin without a pocket-book in his hand. He peeped in with a curious diffidence unlike himself.

"May I intrude my unworthy presence?"

"Come in, Mr. Bodkin, come in," cried Rose, delighted to get for a moment away from herself; "I am always glad to see an old friend, and especially glad when we are in trouble. My fashionable friends have deserted me, Mr. Bodkin."

"Foolish persons, Miss Escomb," Bodkin placed his hat

and stick very carefully on the table, a proof of social decadence, no secretary to a society would do that, "Foolish persons say that it is adversity which tries your friends. That is rubbish. It is prosperity. When you get up in the world your old friends, unless they are real friends, cling on to your skirts and want to get up with you. When you go down again—I am always up and down—you find the same old lot, the jolly helpless lot, in the same old pub, and all glad to see you back again. My old friends are always where I know where to find them, in one of the rooms of the Cheese. Of course when I was Secretary for the Society of —ah, dear me! poor Lord Addlehede—I was forced to cut them all. Now, I am one of them again."

"And what are you doing now, Mr. Bodkin?"

"I would whisper it, Miss Escomb, did not the—the—uniform itself parade the fact. Does not my garb suggest my present calling?"

"Indeed, no, Mr. Bodkin; not at all. You were in black when I saw you last."

"Clerical black—secretarial black."

"And now you are in colours; but the colours tell me nothing."

"To the initiated, Miss Escomb, to those who attend the Sandown Park racecourse, the Kingsbury Meetings, the Croydon Steeplechases, and all the rest, they do more than suggest: they bawl out at the top of their voices, 'Turf—turf—turf!' I live on the turf."

"But how can any man live on the turf?"

"Hush! Miss Escomb. Let me whisper. I am the Sporting Prophet. I am 'Judex' in one paper and 'Sorcerer' in another. Enough of my present calling. It has its points. Tell me of yourself, my dear young lady. I see by the paper —here it is." He pulled a paper out of his pocket.

"The enormous extent of Sir Jacob Escomb's operations perhaps proved too much for the gigantic brain which conducted them, but most likely it will be found that the financial embarrassments which stopped them were the results of a complication of events which no human sagacity could have foretold. There happened one of those

'dead points' which occur in all machinery and can be provided for in iron, but not in human affairs. For once the securities by which this dead point could be passed over were not in hand, and the machine stopped. At a meeting of creditors held yesterday, a vote of sympathy was passed as a preliminary, and Sir Jacob, in a voice choked with emotion, informed them that he had already taken measures for the surrender of everything, even the minutest trifle in the house, to be sold for the benefit of his creditors. He added, what we hope will prove true, that he had still confidence in the providential good fortune which had attended him, and that he bade every man remember that full payment, with ample interest, was only a question of time."

"Now, Miss Escomb, directly I read that, I determined to come straight here at once and apologise for the hard things I said to Sir Jacob only a month ago. If he will not see me, will you tell him that Henry Theophilus Bodkin repents, and begs forgiveness and permission to be numbered still among Sir Jacob's humble admirers? Though on the Turf, Miss Escomb, one may yet do homage to virtue."

"Thank you, Mr. Bodkin. This is very good of you."

"It is what poor Lord Addlehede would have done in his lucid moments," said Bodkin. "One moment, Miss Escomb, I may not have another chance. Everything going—everything to be put under the hammer. May I—may I—I am always near the bottom of the locker, but there is generally a pound or two left behind—will you let me have the great happiness of being considered in the light of—to put it poetically—a humble family Attenborough?"

Rose laughed.

"I think I understand what you mean, Mr. Bodkin, and it is very kind of you. We are not so poor as—as perhaps people think—not quite destitute; but it is just the same, and we shall never, I am sure, forget this kind offer."

Mr. Bodkin took her hand and kissed it.

"We have all been your lovers, Miss Rose, ever since you came here, Reuben Gower and I as well as Mr. Carteret. The sweetest girl—the nicest-spoken that breathes. Were I rich, and were I twenty years younger, it would be hard on Lavinia, for she would find her nose put out of joint. Lavinia as I remember her, a quarter of a century ago,

with a narrow black ribbon tied round her forehead, her hair straight up and down, her sleeves like legs of mutton, and bonnet like a chimney-cowl—had her points—but to compare her with you, Miss Rose—rubbish!"

Rose was going in search of her uncle, when she heard the sound of many voices in the hall.

"There's Reuben," said Bodkin. "Any one could tell Reuben's voice a mile off. And there's Mr. Carteret, and they are laughing. And there is John Gower, and he's laughing too. What does it mean, Miss Rose?"

They had little time for speculation, for the door opened and disclosed the very three men, all, curiously, talking and laughing together.

"Rose, my dear," said Julian—he did not look in the least like a ruined man, and kissed her openly before all the other men without any shame at all—"how are you, my angel? Let me kiss you again. It refreshes like—like Badminton." He did kiss her again, but it was only the tips of her fingers. "I have brought you an old pair of friends, who want to shake hands with you."

"Reuben Gower!" she cried, "and John!"

"Yes, Rose—Reuben Gower—and very much ashamed of himself, too. Reuben Gower, who might have prevented all this mischief, if he had not been an old donkey. Why, I ought to have known that the thing was impossible, and instead of finding out quietly before John spoke to you, I egged him on. Mr. Carteret, my dear, has made me ashamed of myself."

"Don't, Mr. Gower, please," said Rose. "There is nothing to forgive. You acted for the best, I am sure."

"For a fool," said the penitent Reuben; "there is no fool like an old fool. Shake hands, my lass. Why, I've known you since you were that high, and to think that there should be an estrangement between us. And how many a time have you run into tea with John, and toasted your own bread and butter before the fire. Lord! Lord! kiss me again, my pretty, like you did then."

It was John's turn next.

He spoke up like a man.

"It was a blow, Rose; I don't deny it. But I now see what I ought to have expected. You were in London growing into a fashionable young lady, with new tastes different from mine. Carteret has taught me how you live. You would never have been happy with me. But it was a hard blow. Let us be friends again, Rose, and forgive me—" more hand-shaking. "I once called Carteret here a popinjay; that was because I was an ass. I've begged his pardon, Rose, and wished him joy. Now, Carteret, tell her what is coming."

"You see, Rose, I saw that John Gower here, this fellow with the square forehead and the square chin, was a devil of a fellow—beg your pardon, the deuce and all, I mean, for work. So I set myself to find him out, and get him to inoculate me. First of all he was a bit sulky, but he came round pretty soon, and the result is, Rose, that we are going into partnership."

"You into partnership, Julian?"

"Yes, Rose, into partnership. Out of the wreck of my fortune, enough will be saved to start us, and John's invention shall be applied in our new works, bit by bit, we have no fear. With John as engineer-in-chief, myself as his assistant in office work—don't laugh, Rose; it is sober earnest and reality—Reuben as adviser, and—and—some one, if we could find such a man—" here Julian looked hard at Bodkin—"such a man—an active man—" here Bodkin started—"an energetic man—" here Bodkin buttoned his coat vigorously and squared his arms—"one who adds intelligence and experience to zeal for the House which employs him—I say, Rose—" here they all looked at Bodkin —"if we could find such a man—at a salary of say four hundred to begin with, and five if things go well."

"There is such a man, Mr. Carteret," said Bodkin, trembling with excitement; "there is one such a man. I believe only one in all London. He has the experience of having tried all the ways by which men make money, and failed in all. He stands before you—he is Henry Theophilus Bodkin."

"What, and give up the Turf?"

"Sir, the Turf may go——its own way. They may find another Judex. Do you accept my services, gentlemen?"

"We do, Bodkin," said Carteret. "Work for us; stick to us, and we will stick to you."

Bodkin took his hat and stick.

"I hasten," he said, "to convey the joyful news to Lavinia. I tremble lest that incomparable female should be already snapped up—snapped up the third time."

"Stop a minute, Bodkin." This time it was Reuben. "We are both desirous, John and myself, of clearing up our scores with Sir Jacob. We have talked everything over by ourselves, and we are sure that we have done him a grave injustice. I cannot forget that he is my old schoolfellow, and that he and I have worked together side by side for nearly fifty years."

Julian Carteret murmured something about a lion's share of the plunder, but his remarks were not heard.

"And so, Rose, if you will allow me, I will ring the bell, and ask if Sir Jacob will see us."

"And me, too," cried Bodkin. "I also should wish an opportunity of expressing my sense of Sir Jacob's noble conduct."

Julian Carteret screwed up his lips, but said nothing; Rose blushed with a confused sense that she herself ought to express her own sense of shame at certain injurious suspicions, but the shame was not there, somehow.

"I will go myself," she said, "and ask my uncle to see you all."

Presently she returned: Sir Jacob with her.

There was a momentary sensation at the appearance of the martyr. His face, much more solemn than it had been of old, and his deportment was majestic.

"You wish to see me, Reuben?" he said, quietly looking round at the group, of whom Julian was the only member who did not look like a culprit.

"Jacob," said Reuben, speaking in the old Lancashire

blunt way, "Jacob, my chap, I'm vexed and troubled that there has come a cloud between us, and I'm more vexed because it has been my fault. I'm clean ashamed of myself."

"Reuben, do you believe that I"—the word choked him—"that I wilfully spoke an untruth when I said that a marriage between Rose and John had been my desire for years? Tell me, Rose—you will believe her, if you will not believe me—did I know at all that there had been any love passages between you and Julian Carteret?"

"No, sir," said Rose, "you did not know."

"Had you spoken to me, Julian? Had you given me any hint of what had happened?"

"No, Sir Jacob, I certainly had not."

"One question more, Rose. Had you or had you not repeatedly and in the most cordial manner spoken of your old friend John Gower when you first came to me?"

"Yes, uncle, often."

"Now, Reuben, and you, John Gower, is it so very improbable that I, a childless man, should have kept an eye upon the son of my oldest and most faithful friend, that I should have seen with pleasure that he was a hard-working and clever young fellow—that I should have looked upon him as the proper person to succeed myself, and that when he came to me with his invention I should see in the thing, not only a means of raising money to carry on my own work—not only, I say, a chance, in which the hand of Providence was clearly visible; but also an opportunity of carrying my designs into immediate operation? Can you not imagine such a mode of showing my gratitude to you, Reuben, my care for Rose's happiness, and my own prudence for the future all combined? Tell me, is that possible or impossible? You, who know my life, Reuben, is it probable?"

"Jacob," cried Reuben, beside himself with remorse, "forgive me, if for once I doubted you. I will never doubt you again."

"And I too, sir," said John; "will you forgive me?"

Sir Jacob shook hands effusively with both.

"Mr. Carteret and I, sir," John continued, "are to enter into a partnership in a modest way, and to carry out the invention."

"Why in a modest way, John? Why not on a large scale at once? The Escomb works have no master—why not take them? I can, I daresay, arrange for you to take them over."

"Take them over?" asked Reuben. "What the need? Take John and Mr. Carteret in."

"What do you say, Julian?" asked Sir Jacob. "Do you still bear resentment at the loss of your money? Do you still think that it was thrown away, instead of being invested prudently?"

"I think, Sir Jacob, that you must first give me leave to marry your niece."

Julian spoke bluntly, because he did not share in the general enthusiasm.

"Granted at once, Julian. Rose, tell your lover that you do not go to him empty-handed. Rose's fortune, conditional on my consent, Julian, is not lost. You have, with her, thirty thousand pounds. Remark, all of you, that if I withheld my permission, it would have reverted to me. Gentlemen" (he stood before them, this splendid shot having been fired, with both hands upraised, bending the fingers downward, as if pronouncing an episcopal blessing), "I now stand before you all, bereft of everything, everything but the clothes I am dressed in. But I have no longer the pain of feeling that those who know me best misunderstand me the most cruelly."

"The works shall still be Sir Jacob Escomb's," said Reuben shortly. "Mr. Carteret shall invest his money, and John his invention, for shares in the business. Wish you luck, my boy—wish you luck, Mr. Carteret."

"May I," Bodkin advanced, "may I, Sir Jacob, crave pardon for words said in a hurry? Thank you, Sir Jacob. Your noble conduct, reported in the papers of this morning, went to my heart. He has given up all, they said—every-

thing, to the minutest item, to pay his creditors. I have been bankrupt myself: Twice. Once, in the coal line, when my creditors did not wait for me to give up the sticks. They took them. The second time—after I had endeavoured to introduce the wines of Peru to an unsympathising public—there were no sticks left to take. I was in lodgings, and the Commissioners in Portugal Street said unkind things."

So the bankruptcy ended in the rehabilitation of Sir Jacob. He is more prosperous than ever; but he leaves his business entirely to Julian and John Gower. Bodkin, needless, to say, is indefatigable.

Not one—except sometimes Rose, who has uneasy thoughts about her uncle; and Julian, who chuckles quietly to himself—but believes that the conduct of this philanthropist, martyr, and Christian was in every way throughout this trying time worthy of him; no one, except Rose and Julian, suspects that his apology to Reuben and John was an elaborate substitution of what might have been for what was; and no one, except those two, but believes that his misfortunes, which were like a summer storm—black, but brief—were unmerited and nobly borne by this good man.

It is but an episode which we have told. In those volumes which Sir Jacob keeps locked up in his private safe may be found the real history of his career; in them, not in the newspaper reports and the general voice of fame, lies the instructive story of how a fortune can be made out of nothing and a reputation be built upon the shifting sands.

LE CHIEN D'OR

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CHAPTER I.

WE are in Quebec, in the year of grace one thousand six hundred and ninety-seven. It is the close of a hot summer day in the month of August, and the colonists, after the heat and labour of the day, are gathered in groups upon the Grand Battery of Cape Diamond, enjoying the cool evening breeze and the prospect of their noble country, of which, indeed, one can never tire. On the right lie stretched the Plains of Abraham, not yet reddened with the blood of Wolfe and Montcalm. Here and there may be seen a clearing; here and there the sloping roof of the white Canadian homestead; farther west still in the blue distance may be detected the light wreath of smoke which tells of an Iroquois encampment, or the supper-fire of a trapper. Lying beneath them, three hundred feet below, is the broad and mighty River St. Lawrence. There are not yet so many ships as are destined to lie upon its waters as the years pass on; but it is August, the time when the vessels from France have brought their freight and passengers, and are waiting for the return cargo of furs and peltries, which as yet constitute the whole wealth of the country. There are about a dozen of these craft, some so small that modern sailors would laugh at a proposal to ship on board them for the American shores, some high-pooped, stately, like great East Indiamen, which on occasion might be converted into men-of-war for the King's Most Excellent Majesty, should he, in his wisdom, deem it right and fitting to declare war against England.

The river is crowded, too, with canoes, mostly made out of a single hollowed trunk, in which two or three boatmen sit, their paddles held in readiness, but content for the present to float idly down the stream. They are waiting with some impatience for the sun to set and the night to fall. Then you will see all these lazy little craft spring at once into animation. Every canoe will be gently paddled to places where the river makes broad shallows near its banks, or up one of the many creeks which flow into the St. Lawrence. For it is at night that these boatmen pursue their summer trade of spearing the fish attracted by a light held over the bows. Beyond the river is Point Levi, already studded with a few wooden houses of *habitants* who trust to their own courage to defend themselves against the murderous and cowardly Red Indian. To the east, the great river flowing below them for ever on its way to the ocean, stand here and there, upon the high northern bank, the clearings of settlers, with their high-roofed white houses. To the north of the settlements, nothing: only mile beyond mile of forest, dense, dark, untracked, unexplored, where the bear may prowl at his ease, without the least fear of being disturbed by men, and the beaver may build its dam across the river without terror of the trapper: endless miles of fir, hemlock, and maple, losing themselves in the long line of hills beyond. And, just below the city, the fair and smiling Isle of Orleans, covered with wild vines, the garden of New France.

The waters on this still evening in August are so calm, and the air is so clear and free from fog, that everything is reflected clear and sharp. There are not two banks but four, every ship is doubled, and each canoe presents its counterpart in the water beneath.

The city of Quebec was not so stately in the year 1697 as is her noble successor of 1878: its streets were narrow and more winding; its houses were crammed together, as if, which was the fact, they were clustering for shelter within the walls; they were mostly plain structures built of wood; every year saw a conflagration of part of the city, and the

general appearance was mean. But there was the Castle, there was the Hotel Dieu, there was the Convent of the Ursulines, in the Fief St. Joseph, standing almost where they stand now; there were the churches, which still remain, and there was the Seminary. Quebec was not without public buildings. There were also a few stone houses, and all, whether of wood or of stone, had high sloping roofs, of shingle, which formed a picturesque feature; the pavements were of wood; and the streets, where they climbed the hill, were rough and almost precipitous.

The stormy days of Quebec were over; those early days when the colony starved through the miserable winters and fought for life through the summers, when the Algonquins, the Hurons, and the Iroquois by turns threatened their lives, and when to venture outside their palisades and embankments was to risk scalping. The disastrous and shameful time was past when the flag had to be hauled down in submission should one of His Britannic Majesty's ships sail up the river, for want of men to man the guns. As for the English, it was in 1690, only seven years since, stern old Governor De Frontenac drove them in discomfiture from beneath the fort. Whom the Canadians have once defeated, they fear no longer. And as regards the Indians, the Algonquins were dispersed and exterminated, the last survivors of the Hurons were living in Lorette, and the Iroquois came now into the city only to pray the white men for peace and forgiveness.

There are several idle groups talking and sitting among the guns of the battery. We are interested only in one of four persons, a lady in middle age, a young girl of seventeen, and two young men. One of these young men, the elder, is dressed *en grande tenue*, as a French gentleman; he wears lace at his cuffs and collar; his embroidered waistcoat falls nearly to his knees; his shoes have gold buckles, he wears a sword, and he carries gloves. He is in very early manhood; his face is clear cut, thin, and bears a quiet and sedate look, as if he was already heavily charged with the responsibilities of life. This, indeed, is the case. He is Philippe

d'Estrée, the young Seigneur of St. André de Tilly; he is this day twenty-one years of age, and has donned this magnificent apparel — which is, indeed, inherited from his father—in honour of the event, and as suitable for the act of homage which he has paid to the Count de Frontenac, Governor of the colony.

Already the sobering influences of the Canadian climate are clearly manifest in him, one of the third generation of French Canadians. Jean d'Estrée, his grandfather, had been one of Champlain's earliest settlers; his father, François d'Estrée, like himself, was born in Quebec. Like all the native *habitants* Philippe d'Estrée had lost the French vivacity, their brilliancy, and their vehemence. He was a grave and sober young man, who accepted life as a battle which he resolved to fight to the best of his ability. His seignorial rights were held over a small estate of little value, by the farming of which he could live, as Canadian settlers always have lived, in comfort and plenty, but without money. His estate, St. André de Tilly, lay just outside the city walls, where the land is poor and yields little. He had, in addition, a house built handsomely and strongly of stone, on the Grande Place. Although only about twenty years old, it was already covered with ivy, which gave it the appearance of considerable antiquity. The possession of this house, indeed, one of the most considerable in Quebec, gave the Famille d'Estrée a certain social rank which their poor lands would certainly not have effected for them. Among the gentry of New France, the d'Estrées ranked as high as any, and were always present at those more select gatherings which the Count de Frontenac assembled at his ceremonious Court.

Standing beside Philippe was Jean d'Estrée, his younger brother. He was but a boy of fourteen, and his face wore a heavy repellent expression; he wanted the clear features and frank gallant bearing of the elder. He was dressed like any young Canadian farmer of the time, and, indeed, almost of the present time, in a long coat of homespun cloth, which reached to his knee and was tied round the waist by a sash of crimson silk; he wore woollen grey stockings and a

pair of leather moccasins, tied round his ankles. Everything in fact was home made: the straw hat upon his head, which was plaited by an Indian servant, his shirt, made from linen spun out of the flax grown in their own fields; his stockings, his coat, and the loose neckcloth which, left untied, allowed the cool air to get at his throat.

And though the lady, Madame de Montmagny, wife of the Seigneur of Bon Secours, was dressed after the fashion of ladies in France—I mean, of course, of her time and when she left it—her daughter, the girl standing demurely beside her, wore, just as Canadian girls in the Quebec country districts wear now, no bonnet, but a small white cap, a *mantelet* of some bright stuff, and a petticoat of dark cloth. And as this group were dressed, so were all the rest, except that young d'Estrée alone wore, as we have seen, the dress of ceremony. Because, although it is twenty years and more since the Marquis de Tracy arrived with two thousand settlers and that regiment of Carignan which gave us safety and assured us at least against starvation, we are still a simple, frugal people, clinging to the traditions and customs of the old country from which we are drifting farther apart with every day. For France is losing the old faith, which we retain; and France is dropping her simple belief in the aristocracy, which we hold fast; and France is falling away from her priests, to whom we cling closer every day; and France is beginning to disobey those ordinances of the Church which we regard as the very portals of Heaven; and France is following ways of pleasantness and luxury of which we hear and shudder, because here life is so great a reality, so hard a struggle, that luxury and pleasantness seem dreams invented by the devil as a mockery and a snare.

"Tell me, Philippe," said Madame de Montmagny, "of to-day's ceremony."

Philippe's face lit up with pride.

"I was introduced," he said, "by your husband, dressed, like myself, for the Court. The Count de Frontenac sat in the Great Hall, surrounded by the King's officers, the Captain Commandant of the Colonial troops, the Admiral

of the Fleet, the Bishop, the Intendant, and the clergy. I gave up my sword on entering the Hall, and was led by M. de Montmagny to the throne on which the Count sits when he acts as Viceroy. Then on my knees, while the Count held my sword in his hand, I rendered my act of homage, and acknowledged that I held my lands of the King, that I am his man, that I will fight for him and the royal suit and service, as may be required. It is a simple ceremony, but it connects us Canadians with France, and it imposes duties upon us which we must not forget. Then the count raised me by the hand, gave me my sword, and I bowed and retired backwards, as from the presence of the King's Most Excellent Majesty."

"Your dress becomes you, Philippe," said the elder lady.

"One would at least like, before his Majesty's representative, to have the dress and manners of a gentleman," said the young man, with a little natural elation at having successfully got through his part.

Just then, from another of the groups on the Battery, there detached himself a young man about the same age as Philippe d'Estrée, or perhaps a year or two older. He was dressed like him, but with a difference. For Philippe wore his own hair, in short curls, but this young man wore a peruke, in which the curls were quite preposterously long. Philippe, too, wore his hat with one brim turned up; this young gallant turned up both brims of his hat, and had a row of little feathers round it, instead of a plume. Philippe wore broad falling bands, but this young fellow wore small Geneva bands. There were other small points of difference between them, as the carriage of the sword, the pose of the body, the step, which with Philippe was sedate, and with this young gentleman arrogant.

He came towards them, walking delicately, and took off his hat with such a flourish as Charles the Second might have admired.

"In this land of banishment," he began, in that vein of compliment which was then fashionable, "we are happy,

indeed, in being able to bask under the sunshine of Stella's eyes."

He looked at the young lady, who, for her part, turned to her mother as if for an answer.

"You must not expect my daughter, M. de Chevalier," replied the elder lady, "to be apt in the language of the Précieuses. At the Convent of the Ursulines it was simple 'Yes' and 'No.'"

"At least, Madame," replied the Chevalier, "the language of homage to beauty is intelligible all the world over, even in barbarous Canada."

"That barbarous Canada," said Philippe quietly, "is the land of your father's adoption."

"And your grandfather's," replied the young man, "like his coat, which you have this day exhibited to M. de Frontenac and his admiring Court. I congratulate you upon the success of your appearance. We did not laugh till you were gone."

"If the coat is not of the newest fashion," returned the young Seigneur of St. André, "it has been carried bravely before the eyes of the King, and if any one laughs at me before my face I know what to say to that man."

"I have no doubt of it," said the Chevalier. "As a coat it is beyond all praise: as an illustration of the present *mode* it is not without points in disfavour."

"Come, M. le Chevalier," said the elder lady, "you are only recently returned from Paris. It is not every day that we have the advantage of seeing the latest Court fashions illustrated by so accomplished a gentleman. You must lend them to your old friend Philippe, if that is necessary, though I think he will prefer to remain as he is."

Philippe laughed good-naturedly.

"Perhaps I should, Madame. But I thank the Chevalier all the same. When we sat side by side on the benches of the Petit Seminaire, we both wore the homespun of Canada and the moccasins of the country, just like my brother Jean here, and were not ashamed. To-morrow I go back

to the country dress, and shall not be ashamed of it. But then I am only a country farmer. And what will you do, La Perade, when you leave your fine regiment of Orleans, and return to till the soil of your father's seigneurie?"

The Chevalier de la Perade shuddered.

"I cannot tell. I am in no hurry for that day. I do not love agriculture, save in others. Ploughmen sow and reap for soldiers to devour. Meantime I remain with my regiment as long as I can. It is better to make others work for you whenever you can."

Then the talk, which had been without heat or temper throughout, changed into the topics of the day, and they conversed about the little nothings which go to make up the peaceful colonial life. And then night came gradually upon them, and the river, and the forests, and the Plains of Abraham, and the Isle of Orleans at their feet, seemed to fade away into dark spaces with darker belts. And then the canoes lit their lanterns, and the foolish fish, looking up to see what meant this sudden burst of light into the dark depths where they were sleeping, were suddenly speared. And the light wreaths of smoke became points of fire, and the ships on the river became formless masses, each with a lantern burning at the masthead. And the voices of those who spoke, and the tramp of the many feet, became hushed, because the folk were going home.

"Come, Clairette," said her mother. "Chevalier, we lie to-night at the Maison d'Estrée. We hope to see you soon at Montmorenci. Philippe and Jean, your mother will be waiting for you. Come home soon."

The ladies gone, the Chevalier yawned, half turned on his heel, and said he must go too.

He was in the suite of the Governor, an aide-de-camp, as we should call him now; he was a Canadian by birth, the son of Count de la Perade formerly Captain in the gallant Savoy Carignan regiment which came over in 1673 with the Marquis de Tracy. The Captain had obtained a concession—a piece of ground with a narrow frontage to

the river, a long parallelogram of forest stretching some miles away to the north, and a goodly slice of the Isle d'Orleans. He was called the Seigneur de Bon Secours. He had also some small *rentes* in Savoy, which he sold, and so was able not only to establish himself in a style superior to that of most of the Seigneurs, who were simple country squires holding from the Crown, but to send his son to France, to get him a commission in a good regiment, and to bring him back to Canada in some capacity about the Governor's Court. The Count de la Perade was therefore regarded as a man of quite the highest social standing in the Colony, next to the Governor, the Intendent, and the Bishop.

His son, the Chevalier, had been back for a few weeks only. Philippe greeted him with a cordiality only half returned, because the young traveller had seen just enough of Paris to feel the rusticity of his former friends, while he had forgotten their real honesty and bearing. Therefore he looked on the inherited wardrobe of poor Philippe, kept in *armoires* and closets for such an occasion as his reception by M. de Frontenac, and upon the home-made dress of the young *hobereau*, with an undisguised contempt.

"As for Madame de Montmagny," he said to himself, picking his way over the roughnesses of the road to the gates of the Castle of St. Louis, "she is, of course, more antiquated than any grandmother in Paris. The Précieuses! As if we had not done with them five-and-twenty years ago! And *la petite* Clairette, with her slender figure and dainty face! What a shame to give her such a dress and such a cap! I wonder how she would look at the Court! I would be leading her by the hand. The old king would step down the pathway made for him, looking right and left into the ladies' faces, after his fashion, and then he would spy Clairette, and he would stop. "Mademoiselle," he would say in his splendid manner, "suffer an old man to kiss your hand." And then all the Court ladies would "envy, and I—I should be the envied of all, and next morn-

ing half-a-dozen duels, all for the *beaux yeux* of Mademoiselle Clairette de Montmagny."

The boy Jean had by this time gone too, and Philippe was left alone. The light raillery of his old school friend somehow left an unpleasant impression upon him. It was not pleasant to feel that the ceremony of which he thought so much, the assumption of his dignity, Seigneur of St. André, had been shorn of its proper solemnity in the eyes of others by his own old-fashioned attire. It was of no use to repeat to himself that the old Count de Frontenac cared little for that kind of external correctness, provided he could rely on the man who bore the name. It did not help to assure him that the circle who stood round the sturdy old Governor were those who looked for men, not habits. A young man does not like to think himself ridiculous, and Philippe felt as if the bloom and glory of his act of homage had somehow been taken out of it.

Of course, it was not so. Of course the Governor recognised in young d'Estrée a worthy bearer of the good old name. Of course the ridicule of the Chevalier was exaggerated, and the dress in which Philippe appeared at Court was, except in one or two details, one in which he might have appeared in a *salon* of Paris. But it is in these little details that young men place the whole importance of things.

Philippe strolled slowly in the direction of the ivy-covered house of stone, thinking of these things. Suddenly there flashed across his mind a thought which, only a suspicion as yet, was like a sharp knife plunged swiftly into his heart. For it was connected with Clairette.

He had grown up beside her; she was but two years younger than himself; they had played together in the short Canadian summers, skated and gone tobogganing in the long winters, read together, learned to read together. Her mother was the friend of his own; her father was the friend of his own; both families belonged to the same rank, that of the Seigneurs; both were poor, which mattered nothing; both were proud of their gentle blood; both had the same ideas, the same prejudices, the same standpoint from which to

regard their little world. And so, without saying a word to the girl, he had come to regard her as his own property. And it now occurred to him that young De la Perade was beginning to look upon the girl with eyes that meant admiration.

"No," thought Philippe, instinctively clutching at the hilt of his sword. "No, he may laugh at my rusticity. That matters nothing; but he shall not take my bride from me. That touches my honour—*foi de gentilhomme.*"

Within the house there was the usual family circle: his mother, Madame de Montmagny, next to her Clairette, and his brother Jean, poring over a book. A single oil lamp hung from the black rafters of the ceiling, and lit up the group.

Philippe took a chair beside Clairette.

"Tell me, Clairette," he said in low tones which yet had nothing of the lover in them, "tell me what you think of the Chevalier de la Perade."

She looked in his face smiling.

"I think he is amusing. He brings into our quiet colonial life something of the Parisian atmosphere. He has been among the world of which we hear."

"It is a hollow world and a wicked world, my child," said Madame d'Estrée: "a world where men lightly say things which are not true, for no other purpose than to please women who are foolish enough to be pleased by flattery, and where women vie with each other in fine dress, in frivolous amusements, such as stage acting and dancing, and where men and women alike waste the brains which God has bestowed upon them in saying epigrams and fine things in words which you would not understand."

"But to see the Grand Monarque, Madame?" said Clairette.

"That, I own," said Madame de Montmagny, "that would be worth the risk of the journey to Paris and back; that would be something to hand down after we are gone to our children as a family memory to be proud of and to be cherished. M. de la Perade has been actually presented to

the King. It is an advantage which the gentlemen of New France do not often acquire. My poor Philippe, is it not?"

"Yes," replied Philippe readily, because the name of the Great King was one before which all Frenchmen at the time bowed down and worshipped. "Yes, it is a great thing to have been presented at the Court. But I was thinking of the Chevalier's manners. Do you like them, Clairette?"

"Yes," she said. "I like them. He is respectful to ladies, and he asserts his own importance at the same time. It is as if he were a young god condescending to please the weakness of mortals."

"The society of ladies and gentlemen," said Madame d'Estrée, "is based upon the respect paid by the stronger to the weaker. Without that respect, men are brutes and women are slaves."

"Do we not also, we Canadians, respect the weakness of women, mother?" asked her son.

"Surely, Philippe, surely. It is in the manner only, the manner which is acquired at Courts alone, that the gentlemen of Paris surpass those of New France. The Chevalier de la Perade has this manner."

"And I have not," said Philippe.

"And I hope that I never shall have," burst out the boy, raising his head from the book. "If to say what you do not mean, and to sneer at a man because the lace on his coat is old-fashioned, and his scarf of the last generation, is courtly fashion, let me be Canadian."

"Jean, you are young. You do not know the world," said Madame d'Estrée.

"The external manner has to be cultivated, my son," observed Madame Montmagny, "as much as the internal posture of the soul. The graces of conversation, sentiment, and behaviour should be as mirrors in which the Christian virtues may be reflected."

It will be seen that the conversation of this Canadian household was conducted on what would now be called rather a copy-book pattern. It was a great time for mutual

exhortation, and for the practising of those virtues which have now become so much a part of Christian maxim that we have ceased, some of us, to think it worth while to practise them any longer. What are the bonds of morality, say these philosophers, that they alone of things human are never to be relaxed and never changed?

CHAPTER II.

IT is five months later. We are at the New Year, the time when the *habitants*, who have, to be sure, nothing else to do in the winter, spend a whole fortnight in visiting, receiving visits, and running from house to house; and we are at the residence of M. de Montmagny, father of the sweet and tender Clairette.

He is a Canadian of the second generation, the son of one of those who came out hoping to find in New France that toleration for their religion which they could not find at home. The toleration offered was a choice between persecution within the palisades of Quebec or being scalped outside. This disagreeable position led to the reconsideration on the part of most heretics in the colony of their religious convictions. Gradually the arguments of the Catholics were found to have so much more weight, that every Huguenot who had not crossed over the St. Lawrence and gone into New England became a disciple of the old faith, and there were no more heretics, Huguenots, doubters, or free-thinkers left in the colony at all. And to this day, if such there be amongst the French, needs must that they hide their heads or go about in disguise.

M. de Montmagny is a son of a Huguenot *émigré*. Philippe d'Estrée is a grandson of one of the first Frenchmen who landed with Champlain. The young Chevalier de la Perade is the son of one of the latest settlers. Besides the advantage of being nearer to France in the number of years of separation, the Chevalier has the additional advan-

tage, as we have seen, of having actually been in Paris. He has therefore the true French air, and hardly disguises his contempt for the provincialism of the Seigneurs with whom he has to associate. Also, he has yet to discover that a few years of colonial life will certainly make him as sober and as sedate as M. de Montmagny himself. He must, he knows, sooner or later settle down in the colony upon the lands over which his father now reigns. As for his moral character, he is a man who has imbibed the vices as well as the manners of the Court; his talk sparkles, but it is cold; he dazzles, but he does not inspire confidence; he eclipses the simple Canadian gentleman, like Philippe d'Estrée, but he does not supplant him in the regard of others.

During the last five months the friendship of the two young men towards each other has been gradually growing feebler, until it has been replaced by an unspoken hostility. With the arrival of the New Year this feeling has gradually ripened into a passion of active hatred on the part of the Chevalier, and a stern determination in a certain direction on that of Philippe. There were, of course, other reasons for this hostility besides the offensive airs of superiority which the young soldier gave himself. There was, to begin with, jealousy. Philippe's suspicion was well founded; the eyes of the Chevalier fell upon Clairette with admiration which rapidly grew into love; he made no secret of his passion, and while Philippe silently waited, hoping that a favourable time would shortly come for addressing M. de Montmagny, the Chevalier went about the city wearing Clairette's colours, toasting Clairette, and singing the praises of Clairette's beauty.

As regards the girl, she carried herself with the demureness of a properly brought up young lady. No doubt it was pleasant to be the object of such enthusiastic admiration from the most splendid of the young cavaliers about the Court of M. de Frontenac. No doubt, too, she admired in return the Chevalier's gallant manner, his dash, his brilliancy, and the easy confidence of his conversation. But as for him,

one does not know. For, on the other hand, she knew pretty well that Philippe loved her, and, fresh from the convent as she was, she suspected that his love was not quite of the fraternal kind, albeit steady, well disciplined, and silent. She trusted Philippe, too, and there were rumours afloat about the private life of the Chevalier which made her feel a little doubtful of his constancy. Young girls, however, think little of constancy. But Philippe she knew that she could trust implicitly and always. He was, as everybody admitted, a young man of exalted principles, who wanted nothing but a year or two at Court to make him as superior to the Chevalier in manner as he certainly was in all solid qualities. But as for love, she had nothing to do with it; young ladies in Canada had their husbands chosen for them, dutifully fell in love with the young man of their parents' selection, gave their hearts where they were commanded, and obeyed their parents until they obeyed their lords; and the system worked very well, and gave no trouble.

There is another consideration in matters concerning marriage arrangements—that of property. Philippe had land in plenty, but it was of poor quality, and cultivated over a very small proportion. M. de Montmagny's estate was better situated and of better soil; consequently he was richer. But this inequality might have been overlooked. What was a greater danger was the fact that the Chevalier was the son of the richest Seigneur in the whole Province. His father's lands in the Isle of Orleans were, for extent, cultivation, and fertility, by far the most advanced in the colony. Should the Count de la Perade ask for Mademoiselle Clairette for his son, what other answer should a prudent father give? And this invitation was expected daily by M. de Montmagny, who had his reply ready. It was, of course, that Clairette should go to the young man.

New Year's Day; evening in Canadian mid-winter; the guests of the Seigneur of Montmorenci are assembled in the hall which forms a *salon* and *salle à manger* both; a large

room of which the beams of the roof form the only ceiling. The great house stove, which in winter burned by night as well as by day, stands half in the wall of partition, between the *salon* and the kitchen; on either side are the doors leading to the small apartments which are the simple bedrooms of the household; on the right the rooms of Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle; on the left the rooms of the guests and the servants. Seven o'clock: the supper is finished, and the party are sitting still at the table. The priest is one of the guests—was ever Canadian festivity complete without the presence of the priest?—an old man, white-haired, but hale; the others are Philippe and the Chevalier. They tell stories of old Canadian times; of the martyrdom of good Father Lallement, the massacres of the *habitants* by Indians, and especially the great Lachine massacre; the defeat of the English seven or eight years before, the safety and prosperity of the colony, stories of their own prowess in the *chasse* of the bear, and their expeditions up the rivers in search of furs. Some evil genius possessed the Chevalier that night. He openly scoffed at whatever his rival said; he questioned his assertions; he looked incredulous when he heard his narrations; and he rudely interrupted him. M. de Montmagny, not knowing of any ill feeling between the two young men, thought nothing of what seemed to him only boisterous riillery. To Philippe, however, it was not raillery at all, but insult; his rival was making him appear ridiculous before Clairette. He made no reply, or the scantiest, as the Chevalier grew more ungoverned in his attacks, but his face clouded over, and the priest, who knew him well, saw with misgiving that all was not well between the two young men. At nine they retired, according to the comfortable doctrine of the French Canadian that early to bed saves candles.

The Chevalier sat down upon the bed in his room, thinking. What a clumsy colonial *hobereau* was this d'Estrée, compared to himself! He to have the fair Clairette? Never. His father should at once make the necessary overtures;

he would marry her within a month; he would take her back to France; she should shine at Court. Meantime he must begin to undress and get to bed. Then his door opened, Philippe d'Estrée came in. By the light in his eyes, the Chevalier knew what was coming.

"I thank you," said Philippe, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper, "I thank you for the insults which you have been good enough to heap upon me this day. I now come to tell you what I could not tell you before ladies."

"I understand perfectly," said the Chevalier, rising. "When, Monsieur d'Estrée, and where?"

"It is only a question of a few days' difference," said Philippe. "I had already made up my mind that so long as I live, whatever decision her father should make, you should not marry Clairette. That being so, I should have been obliged to insult you on some pretext. Now, I am not good at pretence, not like you gentlemen of Parisian manners. I cannot make up a lie cleverly. I should most certainly have spoiled it all by some *gaucherie*. I thank you, therefore, again, for saving me this trouble and vexation. We will fight, Monsieur, now. If you will permit me to lead the way?"

"*Volontiers*," replied the other gaily. "It is a fine night, but cold. That, however, makes no difference. Bah! we shall be warm enough presently."

He threw his fur cloak round him, took his sword, and prepared to follow his challenger. "Lead on, Monsieur. In silence, if you please."

Doors in Canada were never locked, because there was no one to fear except Indians, and doors will not stop them. And at the moment there was little cause for fear of Indians, the Hurons being already nearly exterminated, and the Algonquins either driven far away from the French settlements, or else reduced to live in small camps, fishing and hunting peacefully.

Philippe then led the way, stealing noiselessly over the boards to the kitchen, through which there was a back way

out of the house. Outside it was a clear moonlight night, without a breath of air to rustle the boughs of the pines against each other. The snow lay thick and soft beneath the feet. It was so clear and bright that the two young men who were thus stealing forth to kill each other could see to play their murderous game as well as if it had been broad daylight.

The house was within half a mile of the Falls of Montmorenci. You could hear as you stood outside the door the raging and the roaring of the waters as they leaped over the precipice into the dark circular pool two or three hundred feet below. But what was a pool of whirling water in summer was now a great cone of ice rising daily higher and higher. Later generations of Canadians would look on the Falls of Montmorenci as furnishing them with the most splendid slopes for those toboggans of which they are so fond. In 1697 some of the people in Quebec knew of Montmorenci just as in London people at the same time might have known of Grasmere and Wastwater, as a name. The two young men who walked through the forest, guided by Philippe, were to a remarkably limited extent open to the influences of scenery that night. Perhaps, however, when one is going to fight a duel, landscape scenery is not a thing to think about. Else, when they stood on the western cliff which looks over the Falls, they might have changed their murderous intentions in view of this great work of God, and gone home humbled and repentant.

It is a very beautiful view, that from the Western Cliff of Montmorenci Fall. It is best in summer, because then the trees are in full leaf on either side, sadly diminished in number since the European axe first broke the stillness of the forest, but stately still. Nothing helps scenery so much as trees. And in these days there is some further assistance to the general effect to be got out of a few odd buildings, the remains of a bridge, a tottering cottage, and so forth. Two hundred years ago there was nothing. From a vast cave of ice which might have been the mouth of some great giant, poured the flood of the Montmorenci River. On either

hand was a level table of rock, between which it leaped over the perpendicular precipice of 200 feet, and, as has been said, it falls into a deep circular pool, beyond which now are the great mills worked by this tremendous water-power, moored, so to speak, on rafts a mile long, upon which stand streets, boulevards, squares, terraces, of pine logs, cut and dressed, ready for the ships to carry them away. Then, there was nothing but the St. Lawrence and the masses of floating ice on the banks of the river.

"Is this your place, Monsieur?" asked the Chevalier, quietly drawing his sword. "*Ma foi!* it is a quiet place for you to die in. Had you not better give up the lady, and let us all be friends again? Come, no one knows of our quarrel. No one shall know. We will walk back again arm in arm. Go to bed, and in the morning we shall have forgotten all about it. Only I shall have Clairette."

He was no coward, this young Chevalier, but he did not want to fight. He had upon him, perhaps, that presentiment of evil which is sometimes said to fall upon man. Unluckily it always comes too late to prevent the occurrence of the evil, and might, therefore, for all the good it does, just as well stay away.

For all answer Philippe drew his sword, lightly flung his glove in his antagonist's face, and stood on guard.

In those days it was excessively bad form to offer your enemy more than the shadow of an insult. In these, things are changed. I have myself seen a man dash his fist in the face of another; I have seen a man box the ears of another; I have seen a man kick another: such things in the seventeenth century were quite impossible among gentlemen. Yet the semblance of such an insult was enough; blood must flow before the Chevalier could rest satisfied after receiving that glove in his face.

The moon, impartially, shone upon both without favour. They divided the moon loyally, neither seeking nor taking advantage.

They looked at each other for a moment, and then the Chevalier taking off his hat and making a low bow, quite in

the courtly style, placed himself in position, and their swords met.

Philippe was skilful in fencing. Every young Canadian had in those days to be a good shot, a good fencer, a good runner—running away in Indian warfare was by no means reprehensible—and a good scout. He was fearless, too, and stood before his adversary with a pulse beating as calmly as if he had been playing with the foils. But he fenced after the old rules of the old school. And the Chevalier knew the newest dodges of the Parisian fencing master. One, two, a parry in tierce, a pass in quart,—what is it? His blade flashes here and there swiftly, dividing the air, until, with a sudden lunge, it passes through the body of his adversary, and Philippe lies before him, bleeding fast to death. The Chevalier draws the sword out carefully, and bends over his fallen enemy.

The unfortunate young Seigneur does not speak. He closes his eyes. The Chevalier bends over him and listens.

"Clairette!" he murmurs, and is dead.

Then the Chevalier put on his cloak again, wiped his blade carefully in the snow, and began to think.

The position was extremely awkward.

Duelling, to be sure, was part of a gentleman's profession. To fight on demand was absolutely necessary. But, then, to go out of the house at dead of night, and in such a night—a cold Canadian night in mid-winter—to fight a duel with his old friend and schoolfellow, without witnesses, and without known provocation, was a disagreeable thing to have to tell. Certainly Clairette might not like it. Very likely her father would not like it. The Chevalier had so far advanced in the knowledge of the world as to be actually callous as to the fact of the death. He fought his man; he killed his man; very well, all was right according to the laws of honour. But how about explaining in the morning?

And then a temptation seized the young man. He would say nothing at all about it. Once over the precipice which overhung the cataract, the body of the slain man

would be carried down the St. Lawrence far, far away, and out to sea, and would never more be found to accuse him of the death.

It was a simple thing to do. He rolled the body, stiffening in death, over and over till it was on the verge of the cliff, and then, because to look over into their white depths, to catch sight of the moonlit sheet of water, tearing for ever and ever downwards, was more than his nerves could bear, he broke a short dead branch from a pine, and with an effort pushed the body of his old schoolfellow over the cliff. The roaring waters were the dirge of poor Philippe; the moon and the stars were the witnesses of the deed.

Then the Chevalier felt himself lonely, and looking about him, shuddered. Could he find his way back to the *habitation?*

It was very light and the footmarks were plain in the snow. Once or twice the thought crossed him that there were six feet, instead of four, but he put aside the suspicion; how could there be?

It seemed an hour before he tracked his way back, crept in at the open door, and sought his room. Next to that chamber was the room in which the dead man was to have slept. But the Chevalier had small scruples about ghosts. He had fought an honourable duel, he said to himself; he had killed his man. Good. He might himself have been killed. Honourable ghosts do not trouble gentlemen for such trifles. So he undressed leisurely—the warmth of the house was pleasant after that cold *quart d'heure* on the edge of the cliff—and went to bed.

In the morning he awoke with a disagreeable thought. Those feet would be tracked in the snow. After all, he would have to tell the whole story.

Then, again, however, fortune befriended him. In the early morning a light wind from the north-west sprang up, bringing with it some clouds, and then a heavy fall.

It was supposed at breakfast that Philippe had gone back early to walk to Quebec. There was a good road all the way; it was only eight miles, and no one was in the least

disturbed. The Chevalier, gay and brilliant, said many excellent things, and grew in favour with both the Seigneur and Madame. Clairette, in maidenly guise, sat still and said nothing. After breakfast she washed up the dishes, a service at the sight of which the Chevalier, thinking of the fine ladies of Paris, secretly groaned and shuddered.

But where was Philippe?

No one ever knew. He had passed the night at Montmorenci; he was not there in the morning, therefore he must have left early; the track through the forest was clear and broad; a child could not have lost himself in it, there were no hostile Indians anywhere, and yet—he never came home.

Never came home. His mother waited for him by day and night. She wandered up and down the road; she made her way into the forest, in case she might find even the dead body of her son, who might have dropped down by the wayside, and so fallen into the sleep from which there is no waking. But she never found him. And presently, in a year or two, as Philippe came back no more, she made up her mind that he must have gone by some unknown path to Heaven, and lay down to follow after him, and so be with him for good and all. And then Jean d'Estrée, the younger son, himself now the Seigneur de St. André, and inheritor of the magnificent dress with the lace cuffs, waited till he should come of age to do homage himself to the old Count de Frontenac, and to reign in his brother's place.

During these years one or two things of great importance happened.

The first was the marriage of the Chevalier de la Perade with Mademoiselle Clairette de Montmagny.

It was one of the most splendid weddings ever celebrated in Quebec. The Governor, the Intendant, the Rector of the Seminary, the *Révérende Mere* of the Convent of the Ursulines, where Clairette had been educated, were all present. The Bishop performed the ceremony; the whole population of Quebec were present to witness it, and the newly-married couple were allowed to be the handsomest and most distin-

guished pair who had as yet graced the simple marriage feasts of Canada. When the Count died, which was very shortly after, the Chevalier took his young wife away to France, where there was chance of distinction in the wars. The wedding was nothing to Jean d'Estrée, that heavy-faced, brooding boy, who was become the Seigneur de St. André. He knew what his brother had wished, guessed it by some intuition of his own, by the same intuition hated the Chevalier, who, he knew, had been his brother's rival, and had now carried off the bride who should have been his, and in some queer, unintelligible way connected him with his brother's death.

It was after the wedding was over, after the young married pair had gone to France, that Jean d'Estrée received news which set his blood coursing in his veins, turned suspicion into certainty, and the dull feeling of hatred into the active resolve on revenge.

There was an old Red Indian, one of that almost extinct race of Algonquins, who lived about the estate of Montmorenci. Sometimes he disappeared for months together, going off to live as he only knew. Then he would come back, bringing fish up to the *habitation* for sale, ask for work in chopping wood, and hang round for a few weeks till his nomad instincts sent him forth again to wander about the streams and woods. This man, a silent, reserved man of the forest, had taken a strange fancy to Jean d'Estrée. Perhaps the beetle-browed boy was as silent as himself. Anyhow, the two would go out together spearing fish, or taking their canoe from one *portage* to another, in search of mink, beaver, and bear. They would pass weeks together in this pursuit, without perhaps speaking a word to each other. Jean liked conversing when it was necessary in simple signs. But one evening, being then camped for the night on the banks of the River Ottawa, the Redskin told a strange story.

He related how, one cold night in winter, three or four years ago, he, being about to coil himself up in his blankets in a wood-shed belonging to the Seigneur de Montmorenci,

was awakened by voices belonging to men coming out of the Seigneur's house; how, with the caution of his race, he arose and followed their voices through the wood, how he crept after the steps of the two whose trail he kept until he found them on the edge of the cliff over the cascade, and saw that they were about to fight.

Then Jean became interested.

The fight, he said, did not last many moments before one fell with the sword of the other through the heart.

And then, with the graphic power which all savages possess—it consists more in pantomime than in words—he described how the survivor, after standing for a few moments in thought, rolled the body over the cliff, and returned home.

"But, Monsieur Jean," said the Indian, "I went back the next day. And I found the dead man's sword and the glove of the other. And I have them still."

"Where are they?" asked Jean.

"Hidden. Under the falls of Montmorenci. Where there is a cave in the rock, and in front of the cave a wall of falling water. That is where I sleep sometimes in summer. Come with me there, Monsieur Jean, and I will show them to you."

Jean was eager to get back; he gave his companion no rest until he agreed to return. They sped in their birch canoe down the broad Ottawa; they passed that Royal Mount where now stands the most stately city of Canada, as Quebec is the most picturesque; they found their way through the Thousand Islands, and crept along the bank of the mighty river until they reached Quebec.

In the early morning, at daybreak, the Indian showed Jean d'Estrée the relics of that mysterious fight. They consisted of a sword and a glove. But the sword was that which had belonged to his brother Philippe; and the glove was one which he knew to have belonged to the Chevalier de la Perade, because it was decorated with the ribbon which he called the colours of his mistress, and he had caused to be woven in parti-coloured silk thread upon it her name—

Clairette. So that now Jean d'Estrée had no doubt. His brother was dead; he had been slain by the Chevalier de la Perade.

CHAPTER III.

JEAN D'ESTRÉE took the glove and the sword home with him to the ivy-covered stone-house in the Grande Place, where he now lived quite alone. He had always been of singularly reserved and solitary habits. After this discovery he became more reserved and more solitary, so that in the little settlement of Quebec he was looked upon as a sort of hermit. In the summer he worked—Canadian farmers, whether they were Seigneurs or not, then had to work—as a peasant cultivating his land, an occupation which enabled him to live in the simple manner of his time. All the hours unoccupied by his agricultural pursuits he spent alone in his house. If he saw any one it was Madame de Montmagny, of whom from time to time he sought information of her son-in-law.

News in those days travelled very slowly. He heard, at long intervals, that the Chevalier, with his wife, had gone to Pondicherry, thence to the Isle of France, that they had returned to France, and were living in Paris; that his wife, the pretty Clairette, was dead; "And now," said Madame de Montmagny, "I suppose he will never return to Canada at all."

"Yes," said Jean d'Estrée, "he will return, some time. I am sure he will return, if only for one thing. Perhaps not yet."

The years went slowly on. The grand old Count de Frontenac was dead, and another Governor came out to take his place. Then Jean d'Estrée put on again the hereditary grand Court dress, and went to pay homage with his brother Seigneurs. This Governor, in his turn, was succeeded by another, and yet another.

Jean d'Estrée arrived at more than middle age. He had

never married. He now spoke to no one at all unless he could not help it, but when the ships arrived from Europe, which was in August and September, he was among the first of those who went down to the Quay to meet the passengers. He was looking for one who tarried in his coming. No one knew how he occupied himself in his lonely house, but one morning in winter a rumour ran that M. d'Estrée had decorated the front of the house with a very curious sign.

That a house should have a sign was not an unusual thing. All merchants' houses had signs. Some of the better houses carried coats of arms painted on the wooden shields or on stone, if they were built of stone. But M. d'Estrée's house was not that of a merchant, nor was this sign a coat of arms. It was a rudely-carved effigy of a dog gnawing a bone. The figure was covered with gilt, and beneath it, carved in the stone, were the following lines:—

Je suis un chien qui ronge l'os,
En le rongeant je prends mon repos ;
Un temps viendra qui n'est pas venu,
Que je mordrai qui m'aura mordu.

It was an enigma. What was signified by the golden dog and the bone? What had dog or bone to do with the Seigneur of St. André?

Those who thought they knew the Seigneur well enough to ask an impertinent question did so, and got little good by the reply. He only smiled in his grave, preoccupied way, and said, "Je suis le chien qui ronge l'os," which left them just as wise as before.

The people grew accustomed to the golden dog, and, as nothing seemed to come of it, ceased to trouble their heads about it. After all, M. d'Estrée was a strange and incomprehensible man. If he chose to live such a solitary life, and to stick up riddles in stone outside his house, he was perfectly *dans son droit* in doing so. In his way it was a regular and blameless life that he spent. He went to mass at due times, obeyed his priest in all matters of religious observance, and

was charitable to the poor. Such a man's whims were to be respected.

It was thirty years since the death of Philippe d'Estrée; thirty years since the marriage of Clairette. Her parents were dead, she was dead, and the Chevalier, now the Count, de la Perade lingered still in France. His Canadian estates were farmed for him; but, as they produced nothing except the means of living to their occupiers, he did not seem anxious to visit them himself.

Nevertheless, on the afternoon of August 18, 1727, when the ship *Pelican* arrived off the Quay, and landed its passengers under the fortress of St. Louis, there was one among the bystanders, the silent Seigneur of St André, whose face flushed red and then turned pale, whose fingers clutched an imaginary something, and whose form trembled. For his enemy had returned, and he recognised him. It was the Count de la Perade.

Time had pressed heavily upon him. The gallant young Chevalier had developed into a fat and bloated voluptuary. His swollen features, the roll of his heavy eyes, the thick lips proclaimed aloud what manner of life had been that led by the gallant Count at the Court of the Regent. He knew no one, and, followed by his valets carrying his effects, began slowly to climb the steep road which leads from the water-edge to the town upon the height. He paused on the top and looked round him. The town had grown during its thirty years of prosperity; large cleared spaces, planted and cultivated, stood where had been pine forests. Below him, in the Isle of Orleans, lay his own property, the Seigneurie of Bon Secours, on which were half-a-dozen farms; and beyond, though too far off to be seen, was the estate of Montmorenci, fallen to him through the death of his wife. They were broad lands which he owned, and he thought with envy how great a Lord they would make him were they only in Poitou or Picardy, instead of on this far off American shore. And then a man dressed in the well remembered old-fashioned Canadian garb, with a girdle of coloured silk, advanced and took off his hat.

"I hope the Count de la Perade is in good health. M. the Count does not remember me. I am Jean d'Estrée, brother of that Philippe whom M. le Comte was good enough formerly to honour with his particular friendship."

The man's manner was perfectly formal and studied; there was no presumption of old *camaraderie:* quite the contrary, he stood uncovered and humble in the presence of so great a man as the friend of the Regent.

"I remember your brother, M. d'Estrée, perfectly—I remember to have heard that he was lost in the forest."

"So it was supposed, erroneously, I believe. He has not, however, been heard of or found since the night of his disappearance."

"But erroneously, M. d'Estrée?" The Count's face paled as he asked the question.

"I say erroneously, M. le Comte, because my brother was too good a *voyageur* to lose himself in the Canadian forests, and because there was, even then, a good road from Montmorenci to Quebec. I believe that he was murdered."

"Murdered? But by whom?"

"That is the question which may well be asked," replied Jean d'Estrée, "and clearly you, M. le Comte, are the last man who would answer it."

M. de la Perade shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a matter of thirty years since. Let us not discuss it. I shall have, perhaps, the honour of receiving M. d'Estrée at my poor house of Montmorenci, whither I go to-morrow."

"And I," said M. d'Estrée, "propose to myself the honour of receiving M. le Comte in my poor house, until it pleases him to return to his own *habitation.* See, M. le Comte, behold the house."

The Count hesitated. It was approaching sunset. There were, as yet, no hotels; there would be no time before nightfall to get his boxes from the ship: he would accept the offer.

"What is your singular sign?" he asked, stopping before the golden dog.

"That," said Jean d'Estrée, "I shall have the honour of explaining to M. le Comte this evening."

The supper that evening was served with a splendour to which Jean d'Estrée's household was wholly unaccustomed. Salmon, common enough to a Canadian, but a great luxury to a traveller who had been two months at sea, wild turkey, wild duck, all sorts of game, made up a more splendid meal than had ever before been served at the table of Jean d'Estrée. The valets of M. de la Perade served this entertainment, which was accompanied by a couple of bottles of cobwebbed and dusty wine, which for thirty years had lain in the cellar.

The Count ate and drank manfully. It was, indeed, only in the evening and at supper that he felt himself in the possession of his full faculties. But his host was a difficult man to entertain. When the Count told a story, M. d'Estrée only looked surprised; when he tried an old well-worn epigram, thinking it would serve this colonial squireen, it was received with perfect coldness.

The conversation naturally flagged.

"Pardon me, M. d'Estrée," said the Count, who was getting to the bottom of the second bottle, "do you laugh no more in New France? When I was a boy I think we used sometimes to amuse ourselves."

"Wise men in Canada never laugh," replied his gloomy entertainer; "they remember that each moment brings death nearer to us. In the midst of life we are in death."

"All the more reason," said the courtier, "to enjoy the present—laugh, man, laugh, sing, drink. Let each past moment be remembered as a moment of joy and happiness."

"My brother Philippe," said Jean, "your old friend Philippe—you remember him, M. le Comte?"

"I—I—I remember him," replied the Count, stammering. Why would the man keep talking of his dead brother?

"He left the supper table at night; he went to bed; but he did not occupy the bed. Where did he go that night?"

"Parbleu!" said the count. "It is thirty years ago. Let the dead bury the dead."

"In the midst of life he met with death. Poor Philippe!

Suppose, M. le Comte, that you and I, together, were to find the murderer?"

He leaned across the table and looked his guest strangely in the face.

"With all my heart, M. d'Estrée." The Count began to think his host must be mad. He wished he was in the safe retreat of his own room, where his two valets would be handy in case of need. "With all my heart. Let us, if we can, find the murderer. Provided, of course, that he *was* murdered."

"Oh yes!—he was murdered—he was murdered! There is no doubt about that. Poor Philippe. After all, M. le Comte is doubtless fatigued, and would wish to retire from the world—I mean for the night, the long night of rest. After that he will have plenty of time to look back with joy upon every moment of his life on earth."

What did the man mean?

"I promised I would show M. le Comte the meaning of the golden dog. I am the golden dog, *qui ronge l'os*. Come out with me, and I will explain the parable. After that you shall retire to your rest."

It was about ten in the evening, a moonlit summer night. In the quiet house every one had gone to bed but themselves.

The Count noticed that his host carried a small parcel under his arm. He felt uneasy and disquieted.

"The dog who gnaws the bone," said Jean d'Estrée, "outside the house, is myself. I wait the time when it is my turn to bite. Only wait long enough and every man's turn comes at length. I have waited for thirty years. Yet my time has come."

"What do you mean, M. d'Estrée?"

"I mean, M. le Comte de la Perade, that I have in my hand" (here he threw off the cloth which had been hanging over the sword, and had disguised its appearance), "that I have here the blade of my brother Philippe which he carried when you murdered him. Stay—one moment—and on my hand is the glove—your glove,—which you wore

just before you stabbed him, once before he fell, once after, and when you kicked his dead body over the cliff into the cascade."

"It was a duel—a fair duel," cried the Count.

"How could it be a duel when you threw the body over the cliff? Tiens——" He raised his arm, and in a moment before the Count could raise his hand, plunged the weapon straight into his heart.

"This is revenge, M. le Comte," he whispered, while the dying man gazed on him with eyes of terror and despair. "In the midst of life we are in death. You are going to your long rest, after which you will remember this moment.

Un temps viendra qui n'est pas venu,
Que je mordrai qui m'aura mordu.

Adieu, M. le Comte."

They found in the morning the body of the newly-arrived Seigneur. He was quite dead, lying in a pool of blood, and he had a sword wound through his heart. M. d'Estrée reported that the Count had supped with him, and that he had left his guest, believing that he was about to retire for the night. The valets declared that they had not left the house, and had heard no sound of disturbance. Then they buried the Count with his fathers, and left the disclosure of the murder to Providence.

Jean d'Estrée returned to his silent and lonely life. He was more sombre than before, more regular with his religious exercises, and it surprised no one when a year or two later he left the world, and buried himself in a monastery. The house of the "Golden Dog" was standing in Quebec until a few years ago, when they pulled it down to make room for the new Post Office.

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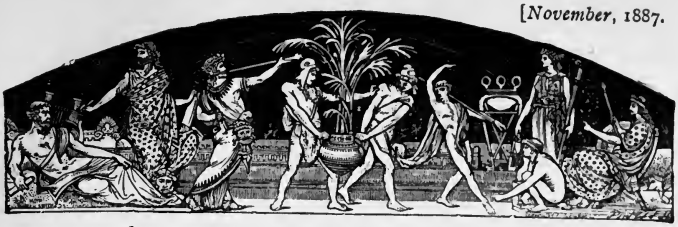

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